

Omnibus Edition

'The Ramayana'

Anthology of Lord Ram's Story from

The Mahabharat, Srimad Bhagwat & Kalidas' Raghuvansham

(Including the Story of His Immediate Ancestors and Descendants)

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PREFACE

This Book titled “An Anthology of Lord Ram’s Stories—The Ramayana: From Mahabharata, Srimad Bhagwata & Kalidas’ Raghuvansham, Including the Story of His Ancestors and Descendants” is a comprehensive narration of this epic story of Lord Ram citing in full the three classical authentic texts referred above.

This Book presents to the world the famous story of the Ramayana, describing the life and time of Lord Ram, from three classical Sanskrit texts, bringing them under one cover. This author feels that such a Book has never been done earlier, and therefore it would stand out as one-of-its-kind in the annals of great classical literature of India with an element of religion injected into it as it deals with the theme of the Ramayana, the revered and ageless Book that describes the life and time of Lord Ram.

Our Book consists of the original Sanskrit text, Roman Transliteration, and a verse-by-verse detailed English narration which is accompanied by extensive explanations of each of the verses in simple, easy-to-understand English so that even a layman can grasp the meaning and thoroughly enjoy the reading without having to strain himself to come to grips regarding what is being said.

As such, this Book is a seminal work on the theme of the Ramayana inasmuch as it brings under one cover three classical texts that describe the epic story of the life and time of Lord Ram, thereby enabling the world, the ordinary reader as well as connoisseurs of classical literature, to read them at one place instead of from three independent books such as the Mahabharat, Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana, and Kalidas’ renowned classic ‘Raghuvansham’.

This Book is structured in two parts, Part A and Part B. The first part has three chapters, viz. chapter nos. 1, 2 and 3, while the second part has two chapters, viz. chapter nos. 4 and 5 as follows:-

Part A:

Chapter 1 narrates the epic story of the Ramayana directly from the Mahabharat as described in its Book 2 called the ‘Van Parva’ (also known as Aranya Parva), in its Chapter nos. 257-275. This particular section is called the ‘Ramopakhyana’, i.e. the narrative dedicated to Lord Ram.

Chapter 2 tells us the story from the Srimad Bhagwat as described in its Canto (Skandha) 9, Chapters (Adhyaaya) 10-11.

Chapter 3 is Kalidas’ Raghuvansham. The story of Lord Ram is narrated in all its finery and in glorious terms by Kalidas in Canto nos. 10-15. It’s a most fascinating and interesting narrative that keeps the reader riveted to the descriptions especially because Kalidas has liberally employed his skill with words and displayed his talent as a remarkable poet in his narrative. He has also used countless metaphors, similes,

analogies and examples in his narratives, making his recounting of the story of the Ramayana a thrilling experience to read.

Part B:

This part narrates the stories associated with the immediate ancestors of Lord Ram, starting from king Anshuman in whose family king Khatvanga (also called Dilip) was born. His son was great king Raghu after whom the line of kings that followed was named as 'Raghu-Vansha', i.e. the family-lineage descending from king Raghu, as well as the stories associated with his descendants, starting from Lord Ram's son Kush, and ending with the last king of the Raghu's dynasty named Agnivarna.

For ease of narration of these two themes, i.e. the immediate ancestors of Lord Ram, and his descendants till this dynasty ended, Part B has been divided into two chapters, 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 narrates the stories related to Lord Ram's immediate forefathers, starting from king Anshuman till king Khatvanga, also called Dilip, from Srimad Bhagwat, Canto (Skandha) 9, Chapter (Adhyaaya) 9, verse nos. 1-49.

Chapter 5 deals with Lord Ram's descendants as narrated in Srimad Bhagwat, Canto (Skandha) 9, Chapter (Adhyaaya) 12, verse nos. 1-9.

Lord Ram belonged to the Solar Race that descended from the Sun God. The first king of this ancient race was Vivasvan (pronounced 'Vivasvān', or 'Vivas-vaan'). His son was king Manu, and the latter's son was king Ikshwaku (pronounced as 'Ikṣvāku' or 'Ik-shavaa-ku'). The dynasty of a long line of kings that descended from Ikshwaku, their forefather, was named after this great person, i.e. this dynasty was called 'Ikshwaku dynasty'.

There were scores of great kings down the line, and when one of them did something great, honourable and memorable then his descendants were named after him. Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇa, a revered and must respected ancient text of the Hindu religion, has a list of all such kings in its Canto (Skandha) 9.

One such king was Raghu, the son of Dilip (or Khatvanga, or Dirghabahu). Raghu had acquired great fame and merit by helping Indra, the king of gods in heaven, by protecting his horse during the Ashwamegha-Yagya (known as the 'horse-sacrifice') that Indra performed. Success in this sacrifice helped to establish king Raghu's reign or influence over a wide swathe of earth, a feat which we call establishing an empire. Thus, Raghu became an Emperor, and the kings that followed him in this line of the Solar Race, otherwise also known as the Ikshwaku race, were called members of the Raghu dynasty, or the rulers of the Raghu Vansha—i.e. the Raghu's race of kings, which was actually an offshoot or branch of the primary race called Solar Race or Ikshwaku race.

The obvious conclusion is that since the litany of kings coming down from the first ruler of the modern human race, the king named Manu, who himself was the son of the Sun-God, is a long list of great kings and emperors encompassing hundreds of centuries, it obviously led to establishment of many branches which were all offshoots of this noble family just like an ancient banyan tree gives off many branches and spreads over a large area at time passes, both prior to Lord Ram and later on after

him. And one such branch or offshoot was the Raghu dynasty, the dynasty in which Lord Ram was born, Raghu being the great grandfather of the Lord.

Therefore, in order to present the story of Lord Ram and the great family in which he was born, it is necessary to read about his ancestors as well as descendants.

This is why when Kalidas— the great Sanskrit poet, playwright and scholar of medieval India who is renowned for his expertise in composing Sanskrit verses and skilful handling of words and phrases to give a most vivid account of the subject matter he was dealing with, and occupies the same acclaimed status in Indian classical literature as William Shakespeare does in English, has employed an extensive use of similes, metaphors and examples in his verses to give them depth of meaning and enhance the beauty and clarity for the purpose of understanding the essence of what is being said in these verses— decided to retell the legendary story of Lord Ram, known universally as the ‘Ramayana’, he chose to begin his famed narration in his classic book known as the ‘Raghuvansham’ that resulted from this desire of his, from king Dilip (Canto nos. 1-3), the father of king Raghu. He based his choice on two factors: (i) Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, Skandha (Canto) 9, Adhyaaya (Chapter) 10, and (ii) the age-old tradition that the father of a great person should be given his due share of respect while praising the son—in this case he was king Dilip, the father of king Raghu after whom this dynasty was named. Kalidas then goes on to describe the story of Dilip’s descendants till king Dashrath (Canto nos. 4-9).

Since his primary objective was to recount the epic story of the Ramayana in his inimitable style, so he described the life and time of Lord Ram in 6 Cantos (Canto nos. 10-15).

Again, he wanted to give his poetical narrative a historical angle as well, so he included the stories of the kings who descended from Lord Ram, beginning with Kush, the Lord’s elder son, and ending with Agnivarna, the last king of the Raghu dynasty (Canto nos. 16-19).

Whereas the story of the Ramayana is told in a quite straight-forward manner in both the Mahabharat and the Srimad Bhagwat, Kalidas’ narrative in the book ‘Raghuvansham’, on the other hand, stands out with its classical mode of narrative which is intricate and a wee-whit difficult to understand, given the liberal use of similes, metaphors and allegories that he has deftly and intricately woven into the text of the verses, something for which Kalidas is very famous, but which, while on the one hand makes the narrative engaging, magnificent and beautiful, yet on the other hand it created a need for elaborate explanation and clarifications in every step-of-the-way, along with notes to explain the examples, similes, analogies and metaphors he has used in simple and clear terms, including their relevance to what is being said in the concerned verse.

As noted herein above, since Kalidas has extensively employed similes, metaphors and allegories in almost all of his verses in Raghuvansham, it necessitated the need to explain each of them comprehensively in simple English, as much as was possible, which includes citing the story behind each such example and explaining its relevance to the verse concerned, so that the reader can get a complete, thorough and exhaustive understanding of what is being said. This approach will make our Book unique and

thoroughly enjoyable for the lay reader as well as the scholar who wish to read every conceivable matter on a given topic at one single place and get a thorough grasp of this classic Book of Kalidas, instead of having to search the relevant details from varied sources scattered elsewhere.

Kalidas' skill with the use of classical mode of Sanskrit language, and the remarkable ability to harness the beauty of poetry that is woven intricately in his compositions, sets his works completely above others in the genre, and puts them in a special category of excellence and magnificence, which in turn raised Kalidas' status to lofty heights as a remarkable poet, story-teller and bard par-excellence, entitling him to be honoured with the title of being the 'William Shakespeare' of India.

This is why, while narrating the story of Raghuvansham of Kalidas specially, I have taken pains to present to the reader background information of such examples, similes and metaphors along with clearly outlining their relevance to the concerned verse in the best possible way I could.

As for Raghuvansham of Kalidas, a word can be added here. While reading this book, it will be observed that in his endeavour to retell the classical and immortal story of the Ramayana in his own words and in a matchless poetic style that was so typical and unique to him, but at the same time maintaining the authenticity of the narrative and presenting facts as they were, he broadly divided his narrative of 'Raghuvansham' into three sections as follows: (i) Canto nos. 1-9 that can be regarded as a 'prologue' which would give the reader a comprehensive background knowledge of the great family of noble kings in which Lord Ram and his other three brothers were born, (ii) Canto nos. 10-15 which can be regarded as the 'main text' of his book as it describes the story of the Ramayana, (iii) and finally Canto nos. 16-19 that formed a sort of an 'epilogue' as it goes on to narrate the deeds of the kings who followed the Lord till the last king of his branch of the dynasty which had descended many thousands of centuries earlier from king Ikshwaku of the Solar Race, i.e. a race of kings that was established by the Sun God.

But Kalidas did not want to hide the truth, no matter how unpalatable his description of the events might seem to be. Therefore, he describes the obnoxious and despicable life of the last king of this dynasty, i.e. Agnivarṇa, who was morally fallen, an extremely promiscuous and sexually pervert person who can be said to be a sexual demon and a rake in practical terms. His overindulgence finally ruined his health beyond redemption, and it led to his premature death due to consumption, wasting away, failure of life-sustaining vital forces and a host of diseases so vividly that would certainly leave any reader stunned and full of repugnance. Kalidas' intent was to emphasise the point why this great dynasty came to an end, and not to malign or blacken the face of a particular king, in this case king Agnivarṇa.

Kalidas' Raghuvansham will be written and published by this author separately as an independent book.

That said, now let us begin reading the story of the Ramayana from (i) the Mahabharat, (ii) Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ, and (iii) Kalidas' Raghuvansham one by one in the following chapters.

I express my sincere thanks to my friend Sri Somil Bharti of Kanpur (B.Tech, IIT Kanpur; MBA, IIM, Calcutta) who has helped me a lot by advising me on technical matters related to Sanskrit Text and its Roman Transliteration via different tools available on the web.

After having completed my last three books, one being Tulsidas' 'Ram Charit Manas', and the other two being books on Lord Hanuman, I had almost given up the idea of writing any further. I was not sure that if I did start writing a new book, I would actually finish it considering the burden of my poor health, advanced age, and the pressure of work at the temple where I have been serving since 1987 after arriving in Ayodhya when I left home (it is the famous and revered shrine dedicated to Lord Ram and Sita at Ayodhya, called the 'Kanak Bhavan Temple'). I had virtually made abandoned the idea of writing any more. But I don't know why, an inner voice kept poking at me not to do so. This voice would tell me: 'Who are you to write anything? Every soul comes to this world with a mission, and a person is most fortunate and privileged if the Lord has selected that person to do His work; not everyone is that lucky. As to your doubts whether or not you would be able to complete the book, leave it in the hands of the Lord. One day would come when you will have reached the finishing line. But frittering away precious time and life in doubting and dithering would serve you no purpose. Remember: you would be remembered for your books for all times to come, and not for anything else.'

These silent thoughts kept churning in my mind and made me restless. Then I would say to myself: 'But I don't want to write anything other than on the theme of Lord Ram. So what should I do?'

The answer came as suddenly as the sun's rays breaking from behind a thick bank of dark clouds: 'Okay; it's perfect. See, one unique book on your chosen theme is waiting to be done, and do you know what? Bring together the story of the Ramayana from three classical sources and prepare a book in which the world is able to access them at one place, in one cover.'

I had to do a little bit of researching work and found that these three sources were: (i) Mahabharat, Book 2 called Van Parva (also known as Aranya Parva), Ramopakhyana, Chapter nos. 257-275; (ii) Srimad Bhagwat: Canto (Skandha) 9, Chapters (Adhyaaya) 10-11; and (iii) Kalidas' Raghuvansham: Canto 10-15 which has the story of the Ramayana. Once it became clear that till date, no one has ever thought of bringing the story of the Ramayana from these three classical books at one place for the convenience of readers, I realized the significance of that 'inner voice' that had been nagging me. I realized that once I complete this book, it would be truly a one-of-its-kind anthology of the story of the Ramayana in the English language.

I still waited for some time to give stability to my thoughts. Then a new idea came to me: why not write a comprehensive book on Lord Ram that would not only tell the story of the Ramayana from the three classical sources cited herein above, but which would also include chapters narrating the story of Lord Ram's immediate forefathers as well as his immediate descendants.

Thus was sown the seed of our present Book. The respected reader must remember that this is not a history book, nor am I some kind of scholar, but this book is a fruit of

my way of showing my love and affection for Lord Ram whom I love and revere like no one else I do, and I devised this method of writing about the Lord's life and time, universally known as the 'Ramayana', as a means to offer my obeisance to him, as well as a means of remembering him and meditating upon him through my writings, because you cannot write unless you think, delve deep into the subject matter, concentrate your mind, and keep yourself focused, which are vital keys for meditation too.

I hope my readers will enjoy reading this Book which is a humble effort of mine, and if my endeavour succeeds I will ever be very grateful to everyone.

And finally, I dedicate this Book to my beloved Lord Ram whom I love from the deepest reaches of my heart, for it is absolutely certain that without his divine blessing, his loving grace, and his encouragement at times when I was almost at sea, a work of such a magnitude would simply not have been possible for me to accomplish.

Amen!

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PART A, Chapter 1

The Story of the Ramayana

The Ramopakhyan from the Mahabharat

(Book 3: Van Parva or Aranya Parva, Canto nos. 257-275)

The story of Lord Ram, universally known as the epic 'Ramayana', is narrated in the Mahabharat, Book 3 called 'Van Parva' (also known as Aranya Parva), Ramopakhyan, Chapter or Canto nos. 257-275. It has approximately 704 verses which succinctly narrates the story of the Ramayana that is more elaborately described in Valmiki's Ramayana, and Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas.

Primarily, Mahabharat describes the events that finally culminated in the great war of that era, a war between cousins belonging to two branches of the same family, i.e. the Pandavas and the Kauravs. During this epic war, Lord Krishna had become the charioteer of Arjun's war chariot, thereby helping the Pandavas win the war that led to the elimination of the Kauravs. Lord Krishna took the side of the Pandavas as they were the followers of Dharma, while the Kauravs were evil, deceitful and greedy; they were pervert, morally fallen and had all the characters that go against the principles of Dharma.

Since our focus is on the story of the 'Ramayana', we will read only those chapters of the Mahabharat that directly deal with it.

But an obvious question arises in the mind of an ordinary reader: What has the story of the Ramayana got to do with Mahabharat? While Ramayana pertains to the Treta Yuga, Mahabharat is related to the Dwapar Yuga; these two Yugas were distinctly separate eras in history. Besides this difference, another is that while Ramayana pertains to Lord Ram, Mahabharat pertains to Lord Krishna. So this question must be answered first.

Hence, a brief background focussing on the question as to why the story of the Ramayana got included in the narrative of the Mahabharat is given below before we start reading the actual text of the Mahabharat that is related to the story of the Ramayana.

Brief background:

The description of Lord Ram's story in Mahabharat's 'Ramopakhyan' is condensed into 704 verses, and is therefore kind of a summary of the main text of the Ramayana that was narrated by sage Valmiki in about 25,000 verses in his famous classic named 'The Ramayana'. The narrative in the Mahabharat is a succinct and condensed version of the story of the Ramayana.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Chapter or Canto no. 256 we read that when the five Pandava brothers were sent to forest exile, they were by accompanied by Draupadi, their chaste and loyal wife. They set up a dwelling near the hermitage of sage Trimbindu. Once, when the five brothers had gone to the forest to collect firewood as well as household victuals such as fruits and edible roots for their daily use, Draupadi was abducted in their absence. She was, however, later on recovered by the Pandavas, but this event left a deep emotional scar on Yudhisthira who was deeply saddened, depressed and grieved by this event that was very humiliating and distressful for all the Pandavas.

Yudhisthira lamented that this was a very unfair and unjust treatment that fate had dealt to them. He felt that he is the most unfortunate human ever born on earth. He wondered if there was anyone before him in the annals of history who had faced a similar situation in life, who had been as unfortunate as he was, and who had been subjected to a similar or worse kind of humiliation for no fault of his. He wanted to know of such an unfortunate person in history for this knowledge would be a great consolation for him, as well as act as a guide to show him the path ahead, to advise him what he ought to do when he faced a similar circumstance—of being wrongly banished to the forest and then having his wife stolen.

With these thoughts churning continuously in his mind and robbing him of his peace, Yudhisthira approached sage Markandeya and opened up his mind and heart before the latter, expressing his grief, distress and a wish for advice. In answer, the sage recounted the story of Lord Ram, which is known as the 'Ramayana', to him in order to console him as well as to encourage him not to lose hope, not to surrender to his misfortunes and so easily yield to his bad fate. Instead of lamenting, feeling lost and distressed, he must show presence of mind, have courage and resilience, recollect his valour and strength of arms that characterise him as a Kshatriya prince who never loses hope and courage even in the face of the gravest of adversities and misfortunes just like Lord Ram had done. The positive outcome of this attitude would be restoration of his honour and self-esteem in due course of time, as well as defeat of his enemies and trouncing of his adversaries who want to trample him down and crush him into oblivion.

But before we proceed, let us first learn briefly about the story of Draupadi's abduction and subsequent developments as follows:

Once, when the five Pandavas had gone to the forest to collect fruits and edible roots for food as well as firewood for their hearth in the hermitage, Draupadi was left alone. Only her maid named Dhaatreyika was with her. Meanwhile, the wicked Jayadratha, who was the brother-in-law of the Kauravas and an evil person, was on the prowl. He was the king of the kingdom of Sindhu and had married Dushala, the only sister of the 100 Kauravas brothers. Jayadratha became fascinated by the charm and beauty of Draupadi, and began to yearn for her.

After the Pandavas were forced to go the forest in exile and Draupadi accompanied them, Jayadratha discovered an opportunity to grab her. On the surface, he convinced the Kauravas that he would secretly pursue the Pandavas to ensure they fulfil the conditions of their forest exile, and report any violations back to the Kauravas,

especially to Duryodhan, who was the most wicked of them all. With this as an excuse, Jayadratha kept a secret track of the movement of the Pandavas.

On the day the five brother had gone to the forest to collect their daily household needs, Jayadratha was informed by his spies that Draupadi was alone in the cottage. Grabbing the opportunity, he approached her and made a lot of sweet gestures as if he was her great well-wisher. He told Draupadi that she was wasting her youth and energy in the forest, and if she would come with him and marry him, he would shower her with all the material comforts in the world and make her his chief queen. Draupadi could easily recognise him as he was the brother-in-law of the Kauravas, the cousins of the Pandavas, and so she talked with him in the beginning. But soon she realised how wicked and evil he was when he made the above proposal to her. She became furious with Jayadratha; her eyes were fiery as she bluntly and fiercely rebuked him. It was a great insult for Jayadratha who could not tolerate her refusal. So he grabbed her, forcibly put her in his chariot and sped away along with his soldiers and junior kings who had accompanied him.

The speeding chariots and horses raised a lot of dust, scattered leaves, and scared the animals of the forest; birds left their nests on trees and flew away in the sky.

Meanwhile, when Yudhishthira saw these ominous signs of birds suddenly flying away towards the sky and a lot of dust arising from the direction of their hermitage, he became alarmed. The five Pandava brothers rushed back to find their dwelling empty. Draupadi's maid, a lady named Dhaatreyika, was weeping inconsolably. She told Yudhishthira about what had happened. Then the five brothers mounted their chariot and gave a hot chase to Jayadratha and his companions. Soon they caught up with the abductors, and in the fierce battle that followed, Arjun with his arrows, and Bhim with his mace slayed every single person who was with Jayadratha. In the melee, Jayadratha managed to escape. Then Arjun shot powerful arrows that had special abilities to strike at the specific target with precision, and killed the horses of Jayadratha's chariot, thereby grounding him. By this time Jayadratha was about 200 miles away. Once again, the five brothers pursued him with lightening speed and soon caught hold of the rascal. After freeing Draupadi from his clutches, Arjun dashed Jayadratha to the ground while Bhim raised his mace to smash his head.

At that time, Yudhishthira showed mercy as Jayadratha had surrendered to them. Instead of killing him, he suggested they shave off his head but leave five tufts of hairs sticking out of the bald scalp to represent the five Pandavas. This made Jayadratha appear hideous.

The Pandavas returned to their cottage, but decided that it would be wise to shift location as it was sure that Jayadratha would seek revenge and return with a huge army. Yudhishthira, who was a follower of Dharma, did not like the prospect of engaging in war at a time when they were to live as ascetics in the forest. Hence, they shifted to another part of the forest near the hermitage of sage Markandeya.

However, Yudhishthira was very dismayed at the turn of events, and wondered if there had been anyone else in the past who had to endure the kind of suffering, humiliation and distress like the Pandavas had to undergo. With this thought constantly disturbing his mind, he approached sage Markandeya to seek his comfort and advice. It was then

that the sage recounted the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ramayana, to him. Yudhisthira found his peace of mind and felt comforted.

Besides the general point that the story of Lord Ram as narrated in the Mahabharat is a summarised version of the one narrated in Ramayana, there is one more main difference: it is that while in the primary epic Ramayana, Lord Ram has been treated as a Divine Being because he is regarded as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, in the Mahabharat Lord Ram is treated as a noble human being who had to endure the same sort of hardships and sufferings as Yudhisthira had to go through. This approach of sage Markandeya resonated well with Yudhisthira, as it also tells him to have courage and a positive outlook, and wait patiently till the time of the forest exile of the Pandavas ended after which they should go back and reclaim their right to the kingdom just like Lord Ram had gone back at the end of his forest exile to be crowned the king of Ayodhya.

With this background knowledge, let us now begin reading the story of the Ramayana from Mahabharat, Book 3—the Van Parva or the Aranakya Parva, Ramopakhyana, Chapter or Canto nos. 257-275.

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Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto 257-275:

{The background: The Pandava brothers were exiled to the forest where Yudhisthira's wife was abducted. This event completely demoralised him, filled him with grief and excess of sadness, as he felt that he is the most unfortunate human ever born on earth. He wandered if there was someone more unfortunate than him in the past, for this knowledge would be a great consolation for him, as well as act as a guide to show him the path ahead, to advise him what he ought to do when he faced a similar circumstance—of being wrongly banished to the forest and then having his wife stolen.

Yudhisthira opened up his mind and heart before sage Markandeya, expressing his grief, distress, and a wish for advice. In answer, the sage recounted the story of Lord Ram, which is known as the 'Ramayana', to him in order to console him as well as encouraging him not to lose hope, not to surrender to his misfortunes and so easily yield to his bad fate, but instead of lamenting, feeling lost and distressed he must show presence of mind, have courage and resilience, recollect his valour and strength of arms that characterise him as a Kshatriya prince who never loses hope and courage even in the face of the gravest of adversities and misfortunes just like Lord Ram had done. The positive outcome of this attitude would be restoration of his honour and self-esteem, as well as defeat his enemies and adversaries who want to trample him down into oblivion.

The following verses narrate in brief the legendary epic story of Lord Ram as described in the epic known as the 'Ramayana'. Markandeya's brief narrative condenses the extensive history of the Ramayana into a limited number of verses, but at the same time it leaves out no details that were an essential element of the story recounted with the aim of consoling Yudhisthira and helping him to overcome his depression and dismay.

With this background information, let us now commence with our detailed reading of the story of the Ramayana as narrated by sage Markandeya (in order to

answer Yudhisthira's query) as described in the Mahabharat, Van Parva (which is also known as Aranya Parva), in Chapters 257-to-275. The Van Parva is the 3rd book of Mahabharat.

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Canto 257:

1: जनमेजय उवाच

1: एवं हतायां कृष्णायां प्राप्य क्लेशमनुत्तमम्
अत ऊर्ध्वं नरव्याघ्राः किमकुर्वत पाण्डवाः

1: janamejaya uvāca

1: evaṃ hṛtāyāṃ kṛṣṇāyāṃ prāpya kleśamanuttamam
ata ūrdhvaṃ naravyāghrāḥ kimakurvata pāṇḍavāḥ

Verse no. 1: Janmanjaya asked: "After rescuing Draupadi (also known as Krishna) and enduring immense hardship, what did the Pandavas, the great warriors who could be compared to tigers among men, do next?"

2: वैशंपायन उवाच

2: एवं कृष्णां मोक्षयित्वा विनिर्जित्य जयद्रथम्
आसां चक्रे मुनिगणैर्धर्मराजो युधिष्ठिरः

2: vaiśampāyana uvāca

2: evaṃ kṛṣṇāṃ mokṣayitvā vinirjitya jayadratham
āsāṃ cakre munigaṇairdharmarājo yudhiṣṭhiraḥ

Verse no. 2: Vaishampayana replied: "After having freed Draupadi (i.e. Krishna) and vanquishing Jayadratha (her abductor), Dharmaraja Yudhishtir sat down with a gathering of forest-dwelling sages who surrounded him in a ring.

3: तेषां मध्ये महर्षीणां शृण्वतामनुशोचताम्

मार्कण्डेयमिदं वाक्यमब्रवीत्पाण्डुनन्दनः

3: teṣāṃ madhye maharṣīṇāṃ śṛṇvatāmanuśocatām
mārkaṇḍeyamidaṃ vākyaṃ abravītpāṇḍunandanaḥ

Verse no. 3: As all the great sages listened attentively to Yudhisthir's account and lamented at his misfortune, he spoke to sage Markandeya who presided over the assembly of sages. Yudhisthir said to Marandeya as follows—

4: मन्ये कालश्च बलवान्दैवं च विधिनिर्मितम्
 भवितव्यं च भूतानां यस्य नास्ति व्यतिक्रमः
 5: कथं हि पत्नीमस्माकं धर्मज्ञां धर्मचारिणीम्
 संस्पृशेदीदृशो भावः शुचिं स्तैन्यमिवानृतम्
 6: न हि पापं कृतं किञ्चित्कर्म वा निन्दितं क्वचित्
 द्रौपद्या ब्राह्मणेष्वेव धर्मः सुचरितो महान्

4: manye kālaśca balavāndaivaṃ ca vidhinirmitam
 bhavitavyaṃ ca bhūtānāṃ yasya nāsti vyatikramaḥ

5: kathaṃ hi patnīmasmākaṃ dharmajñāṃ dharmacāriṇīm
 saṃspr̥śedīdṛśo bhāvaḥ śuciṃ stainyaṃivānṛtam

6: na hi pāpaṃ kṛtaṃ kiṃcitkarma vā ninditaṃ kvacit
 draupadyā brāhmaṇeṣveva dharmāḥ sucarito mahān

Verse no. 4: {Addressing sage Markandeya, king Yudhisthir said:} "Oh illustrious sage! I think that time (Kala) and destiny (Daiva) are very powerful elements in creation. What is destined for a living being and the course of events preordained by fate cannot be avoided by anyone.

Verse no. 5: Our wife (Draupadi) is well-versed in the principles of Dharma and conducts herself accordingly. How can then such a virtuous lady be subjected to such a vile deed as being abducted by an evil person? How can such a fallen man even dare to touch her? It is as shocking as accusing someone, who is pure and faultless beyond an iota of doubt, of committing a theft?

Verse no. 6: She has never committed a sin or an evil deed. She has never committed an act that can be censured for being improper. She has always practised the greatest form of Dharma, and has always served Brahmins and got their blessings. I just can't reconcile my mind to come to terms with this completely unjust and unwarranted situation.

7: तां जहार बलाद्राजा मूढबुद्धिर्जयद्रथः
 तस्याः संहरणात्प्राप्तः शिरसः केशवापनम्
 पराजयं च संग्रामे ससहायः समाप्तवान्
 8: प्रत्याहृता तथास्माभिर्हृत्वा तत्सैन्धवं बलम्
 तद्धारहरणं प्राप्तमस्माभिरवितर्कितम्

7: tāṃ jahāra balādrājā mūḍhabuddhirjayadrathaḥ
 tasyāḥ saṃharaṇātprāptaḥ śirasaḥ keśavāpanam
 parājayaṃ ca saṃgrāme sasahāyaḥ samāptavān

8: pratyāhṛtā tathāsmābhirhatvā tatsaindhavaṃ balam
taddārahaṇaṃ prāptamasmābhiravitarkitam

Verse no. 7: Yet that foolish king Jayadratha managed to abduct her by force. For this unpardonable crime of his, he had the hair on his head shaved off (leaving five tufts to represent us five brothers); he was also defeated in battle along with his allies, and faced disgrace that he would never forget in his life.

Verse no. 8: It is true that we have got Draupadi back after destroying the forces of the king of Sindhu, i.e. Jayadrath's forces (tatsaindhavaṃ balam). But the notorious act of abduction, while we were distracted, has sullied us and our reputation, causing a lot of distress and turmoil for us.

9: दुःखश्चायं वने वासो मृगयायां च जीविका

हिंसा च मृगजातीनां वनौकोभिर्वनौकसाम्

ज्ञातिभिर्विप्रवासश्च मिथ्या व्यवसितैरयम्

10: अस्ति नूनं मया कश्चिदल्पभाग्यतरो नरः

भवता दृष्टपूर्वो वा श्रुतपूर्वोऽपि वा भवेत्

9: duḥkhaścāyaṃ vane vāso mṛgayāyāṃ ca jīvikā

hiṃsā ca mṛgajātīnāṃ vanaukobhirvanaukasām

jñātibhirvipravāsaśca mithyā vyavasitairayam

10: asti nūnaṃ mayā kaścidalpabhāgyataro naraḥ

bhavatā dṛṣṭapūrvo vā śrutapūrvo'pi vā bhavet

Verse no. 9: This life in the forest is full of misery. We endure other types of suffering too. We are compelled to sustain ourselves through hunting, which means that harmless creatures or animals who live fearlessly in their natural habitat are being harmed and subjected to violence by us, though we don't want to do so. It is such an irony that this forest exile has been imposed upon us by none other than but our own relatives (i.e. the Kauravas) who resorted to falsehood.

Verse no. 10: Oh great sage! Is there any other man who is more unfortunate than I am? I think that I am the most unfortunate man alive. Please tell me if you are aware of, or have ever seen or heard of any other person of an earlier time who had to endure the kind of torments and humiliation that I have been subjected to for no fault of mine?"

Thus ends Canto 257.

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{In the passages that follow herein below, sage Markandeya narrated the story of Lord Ram, universally known as the 'Ramayana', to prince Yudhisthira to answer his query in the previous canto no. 257.}

Canto 258:

- 1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच
 1: प्राप्तमप्रतिमं दुःखं रामेण भरतर्षभ
 रक्षसा जानकी तस्य हृता भार्या बलीयसा
 2: आश्रमाद्राक्षसेन्द्रेण रावणेन विहायसा
 मायामास्थाय तरसा हत्वा गृध्रं जटायुषम्
 3: प्रत्याजहार तां रामः सुग्रीवबलमाश्रितः
 बद्ध्वा सेतुं समुद्रस्य दग्ध्वा लङ्कां शितैः शरैः

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: prāptamapratimaṁ duḥkhaṁ rāmeṇa bharatarṣabha
 rakṣasā jānakī tasya hṛtā bhāryā baliyasā

2: āśramādrākṣasendreṇa rāvaṇena vihāyasā
 māyāmāsthāya tarasā hatvā gṛdhraṁ jaṭāyuṣam

3: pratyājahāra tāṁ rāmaḥ sugrīvabalamāśritaḥ
 baddhvā setuṁ samudrasya dagdhvā laṅkāṁ śitaiḥ śaraiḥ

Verse no. 1: Sage Markandeya said: “Oh king; you are noble in the lineage of noble kings of Bharat (modern name: India). In an earlier era, Lord Ram (who too belonged to such a noble lineage and was the best amongst men) had confronted a similar misery that inflicted unparalleled sorrow upon him. His wife, Janaki (Sita), was forcibly abducted by a mighty but evil demon.

Verse no. 2: The name of that demon king was Ravana (of Lanka). He abducted Sita from the hermitage of Lord Ram by using deceit, and then swiftly carried her away on his chariot. On the way, he killed the vulture Jatau when the latter tried to intervene to save Sita from his clutches.

Verse no. 3: In order to retrieve her, Lord Ram took the help of Sugriv (the ruler of the kingdom of Kishkindha) and his army. Lord Ram then got a bridge laid across the ocean in order to cross over to Lanka, the capital of Ravana. In the ensuing confrontation, Lanka was burned and reduced to ashes, and Ravana was killed. Finally, Lord Ram freed Sita and got her back.”

[Note—Obviously, this is a very brief and only an outline account of the major part of the story of the Ramayana that deals in great detail with Lord Ram’s forest exile, Sita’s abduction, how Lord Ram came in touch with Sugriv who volunteered to help him with his army, the burning of Lanka, the construction of the bridge, the no-holds barred epic war, the elimination of the demons led by their king Ravana, and the liberation of Sita. These episodes resonated perfectly with the personal experience of Yudhishtir with regard to Draupadi. So he listened attentively.]

4: युधिष्ठिर उवाच

4: कस्मिन्नामः कुले जातः किंवीर्यः किंपराक्रमः

रावणः कस्य वा पुत्रः किं वैरं तस्य तेन ह

5: एतन्मे भगवन्सर्वं सम्यगाख्यातुमर्हसि

श्रोतुमिच्छामि चरितं रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः

4: yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

4: kasminrāmaḥ kule jātaḥ kiṃvīryaḥ kiṃparākramaḥ
rāvaṇaḥ kasya vā putraḥ kiṃ vairam tasya tena ha

5: etanme bhagavansarvaṃ samyagākhyātumarhasi
śrotumicchāmi caritaṃ rāmasyākliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ

Verse no. 4: Yudhisthira asked sage Markandeya: “In which family was Lord Ram born; what was his lineage? What were his virtues and deeds? How gallant was he? Whose son was Ravana, and why was there enmity between them?”

Verse no. 5: Oh revered sage! Please tell me all this in detail. I wish to hear the story of Lord Ram who had done remarkable deeds that were done in accordance with the principles of Dharma, thus making those deeds flawless and unsullied.”

6: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

6: अजो नामाभवद्राजा महानिक्श्वाकुवंशजः

तस्य पुत्रो दशरथः शश्वत्स्वाध्यायवाञ्छुचिः

7: अभवंस्तस्य चत्वारः पुत्रा धर्मार्थकोविदाः

रामलक्ष्मणशत्रुघ्ना भरतश्च महाबलः

8: रामस्य माता कौसल्या कैकेयी भरतस्य तु

सुतौ लक्ष्मणशत्रुघ्नौ सुमित्रायाः परंतपौ

6: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

6: ajo nāmābhavadrājā mahānikṣvākuvaṃśajāḥ
tasya putro daśarathaḥ śaśvatsvādhyāyavāṅśuciḥ

7: abhavaṃstasya catvāraḥ putrā dharmārthakovidāḥ
rāmalakṣmaṇaśatrughnā bharataśca mahābalaḥ

8: rāmasya mātā kausalyā kaikeyī bharatasya tu
sutau lakṣmaṇaśatrughnau sumitrāyāḥ paramtapau

Verse no. 6: Sage Markandeya replied: “In the lineage of king Ikshvaku, there was a great king by the name of Aja. His son was Dasharath, a pure and learned man always devoted to learning and study of sacred texts.

Verse no. 7: Dashrath had four sons who were skilled in the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility in thought and conduct), and thoroughly understood its many aspects. These four sons were Ram, Laxman, Shatrughan, and Bharat. All of them were strong, and possessed great strength, abilities and powers (mahābalaḥ).

Verse no. 8: Lord Ram's mother was Kaushalya, while Bharat's was Kaikeyi. Laxman and Shatrughan, who were great warriors and vanquishers of enemies, were the sons of Sumitra.

9: विदेहराजो जनकः सीता तस्यात्मजा विभो
यां चकार स्वयं त्वष्टा रामस्य महिषीं प्रियाम्
10: एतद्रामस्य ते जन्म सीतायाश्च प्रकीर्तितम्
रावणस्यापि ते जन्म व्याख्यास्यामि जनेश्वर

9: videharājo janakaḥ sītā tasyātmajā vibho
yām cakāra svayaṁ tvaṣṭā rāmasya mahiṣīm priyām

10: etadrāmasya te janma sītāyāśca prakīrtitam
rāvaṇasyāpi te janma vyākhyāsyāmi janeśvara

Verse no. 9: Oh lord! Janak was the king of Videha, and his daughter was named Sita. The Creator, who had created her, had himself chosen her destiny, that in due course of time she would become a beloved wife of Lord Ram. {To wit, it was by divine design that Sita would eventually be Lord Ram's wife.}

Verse no. 10: I have thus recounted to you in brief the births of Lord Ram and his wife Sita. Oh lord of men! I will now tell you about Ravana's birth and his lineage.

11: पितामहो रावणस्य साक्षाद्देवः प्रजापतिः
स्वयंभूः सर्वलोकानां प्रभुः स्रष्टा महातपाः
12: पुलस्त्यो नाम तस्यासीन्मानसो दयितः सुतः
तस्य वैश्रवणो नाम गवि पुत्रोऽभवत्प्रभुः
13: पितरं स समुत्सृज्य पितामहमुपस्थितः
तस्य कोपात्पिता राजन्ससर्जात्मानमात्मना

11: pitāmaho rāvaṇasya sākṣāddevaḥ prajāpatiḥ
svayaṁbhūḥ sarvalokānām prabhuḥ sraṣṭā mahātapāḥ

12: pulastyo nāma tasyāsīnmānaso dayitaḥ sutah
tasya vaiśravaṇo nāma gavi putro'bhavatprabhuḥ

13: pitaraṃ sa samutsrjya pitāmahamupasthitaḥ
tasya kopātpitā rājansasarjātmānamātmanā

Verse no. 11: Ravana's great grandfather was called Prajapati, who was none other than Lord Brahma, the creator of this world and of all beings. Prajapati was a great ascetic and the lord of the world. He was self-born, and had the rare ability to create an offspring out of own self using his mental powers of creation that was acquired by deep meditation and practicing austerities.

Verse no. 12: He had a beloved son named Pulastya, born through his mental powers. Pulastya had a son by the name of Vaishravana who was powerful and noble.

Verse no. 13: But Vaishravana abandoned his father and went to his grandfather Prajapati. Oh king! His father Pulastya was angered at this. So he created another son in his likeness.

14: स जज्ञे विश्रवा नाम तस्यात्मार्धेन वै दिवजः

प्रतीकाराय सक्रोधस्ततो वैश्रवणस्य वै

15: पितामहस्तु प्रीतात्मा ददौ वैश्रवणस्य ह

अमरत्वं धनेशत्वं लोकपालत्वमेव च

16: ईशानेन तथा सख्यं पुत्रं च नलकूबरम्

राजधानीनिवेशं च लङ्कां रक्षोगणान्विताम्

17: विमानं पुष्पकं नाम कामगं च ददौ प्रभुः ।

यक्षाणामाधिपत्यं च राजराजत्वमेव च ॥ १७॥

14: sa jajñe viśravā nāma tasyātmārdhena vai dvijaḥ
pratīkāraya sakrodhastato vaiśravaṇasya vai

15: pitāmahastu prītātmā dadau vaiśravaṇasya ha
amaratvaṃ dhaneśatvaṃ lokapālatvameva ca

16: īśānena tathā sakhyaṃ putraṃ ca nalakūbaram
rājadhānīniveśaṃ ca laṅkāṃ rakṣogaṇānvitām

17: vimānaṃ puṣpakaṃ nāma kāmagāṃ ca dadau prabhuḥ ।
yakṣāṇāmādhipatyaṃ ca rājarājatvameva ca ॥ 17॥

Verse no. 14: In great wrath, Pulastya created Vishrava from half of himself (i.e. half of his essence), so that Vaishravana could be countered.

Verse no. 15: But Brahma, the grandfather, was delighted and happy with Vaishravana. So he conferred immortality to Vaishravana, besides making him the lord of wealth and riches of the world. Brahma also made him the guardian of the world he had created. {This relates to the physical world conventionally known as earth.}

Verse no. 16: He (Vaishravana) was given friendship with Ishan (Lord Shiva). While making Vaishravana the lord of wealth and riches of the world, Brahma gave him the title of Kuber, and granted him a son by the name of Nala-kuber. Lanka became his capital on earth; it was inhabited by demons known as the rakshasas.”

Verse no. 17: Brahma also gave Kuber an airplane called Pushpak that could be driven anywhere and steered by one's mere wish. Besides it, Brahma made Kuber the lord of Yakshas, and bestowed upon him the grand title of 'King of kings' (which translates into meaning that Kuber became an emperor of all the kings in this world).

Thus ends Canto 258.

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Canto 259:

1:मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: पुलस्त्यस्य तु यः क्रोधादर्थदेहोऽभवन्मुनिः

विश्रवा नाम सक्रोधः स वैश्रवणमैक्षत

2: बुबुधे तं तु सक्रोधं पितरं राक्षसेश्वरः

कुबेरस्तत्प्रसादार्थं यतते स्म सदा नृप

3: स राजराजो लङ्कायां निवसन्नरवाहनः

राक्षसीः प्रददौ तिस्रः पितुर्वै परिचारिकाः

1:mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: pulastyasya tu yaḥ krodhādardhadeho'bhavanmuniḥ

viśravā nāma sakrodhaḥ sa vaiśravaṇamaikṣata

2: bubudhe taṁ tu sakrodhaṁ pitaraṁ rākṣaseśvaraḥ

kuberastatprasādārthaṁ yatate sma sadā nṛpa

3: sa rājarājo laṅkāyāṁ nivasannaravāhanaḥ

rākṣasiḥ pradadau tisraḥ piturvai paricārikāḥ

Verse no. 1: Markandeya continued his narration: “Once, Vishrava saw Vaishravana angrily because the latter had caused annoyance to his father sage Pulastya.

Verse no. 2: Oh king! Vaishravana decided to placate Vishrava as well as to win the favour of his father sage Pulastya.

Verse no. 3: Hence, Vaishravana, also called Kuber, who was the lord of Lanka and had the self-driven plane at his disposal, decided to send three female demons known as rakshasis to serve and attend them.

4: तास्तदा तं महात्मानं संतोषयितुमुद्यताः
 ऋषिं भरतशार्दूल नृत्तगीतविशारदाः
 5: पुष्पोत्कटा च राका च मालिनी च विशां पते
 अन्योन्यस्पर्धया राजञ्श्रेयस्कामाः सुमध्यमाः
 6: तासां स भगवांस्तुष्टो महात्मा प्रददौ वरान्
 लोकपालोपमान्पुत्रानेकैकस्या यथेप्सितान्
 7: पुष्पोत्कटायां जज्ञाते द्वौ पुत्रौ राक्षसेश्वरौ
 कुम्भकर्णदशग्रीवौ बलेनाप्रतिमौ भुवि
 8: मालिनी जनयामास पुत्रमेकं विभीषणम्
 राकायां मिथुनं जज्ञे खरः शूर्पणखा तथा

4: tāstadā taṁ mahātmānaṁ saṁtoṣayitumudyatāḥ
 ṛṣiṁ bharataśārdūla nṛtta-gītaviśāradaḥ

5: puṣpotkaṭā ca rākā ca mālinī ca viśāṁ pate
 anyonyasparḍhayā rājāñśreyaskāmāḥ sumadhyamāḥ

6: tāsāṁ sa bhagavāṁstuṣṭo mahātmā pradadau varān
 lokapālopa-mānputrānekaikasyā yathepsitān

7: puṣpotkaṭāyāṁ jajñāte dvau putrau rākṣaseśvarau
 kumbhakarnaḍaśagrīvau balenāpratimau bhuvi

8: mālinī janayāmāsa putramekaṁ vibhīṣaṇam
 rākāyāṁ mithunaṁ jajñe kharah śūrpaṇakhā tathā

Verse no. 4: Oh lion among men who have descended from the great king Bharata (“bharataśārdūla”)¹! These three female demons were always ready to satisfy the revered sages. They were skilled in dancing and singing, and employed their art to entertain the sage.

[Note—¹The word bharataśārdūla may also be interpreted as a lion amongst men of the land of Bharat, the modern day India. Here, as is obvious from the context, Markandeya is addressing Yudishthir.]

Verse no. 5: The names of these three attendants were Pushpotkata, Raka and Malini. They were in their prime of age and had slender waists (sumadhyamāḥ). {They were slim. This physical characteristic is necessary for dancing. It made them charming too.} All of them rivalled each other, vying to do their best to please the sages and win their favour.

Verse no. 6: Being pleased with them and their service, the great sage granted them boons. As they desired, he gave each of them a son of their choice, sons who would be comparable in status to the guardians of the world¹.

[Note—¹Though it is not said in the verse which of the two sages, Pulastya or Vishrava, granted the three attendants boons, but Ravana and others have been called the grandsons of Pulastya—this fact has been clearly mentioned in Tulsidas' epic story of Lord Ram, known as the 'Ram Charit Manas', in its Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 20.

Hence, though it may have actually been Pulastya who granted them the boons that resulted in the birth of Ravana and others, but he did it on the behalf of his son Vishrava because he wished to create the latter's descendants who could take revenge against Vaishravana.

The point is that Ravana and his siblings were deemed to be the sons of Vishrava for all practical purposes, and this fact has been clearly endorsed by the Fire God in Canto 360, verse nos. 2-3 of Van Parva when he went to Brahma to complain against Ravana. The Fire God told Brahma that 'Ravana, the son of Vishrava, is tormenting all the creatures'.]

Verse no. 7: Pushpotkata gave birth to two sons who were the lords of the demons (rakshasas). Their names were Kumbhakarna and Dashagriva (one with ten necks; another name of Ravana who had ten heads). They were unmatched on earth in strength and valour.

Verse no. 8: Malini gave birth to a single son named Vibhishan. Raka gave birth to twins—a son named Khar, and a daughter named Shurpanakha.

9: विभीषणस्तु रूपेण सर्वेभ्योऽभ्यधिकोऽभवत्

स बभूव महाभागो धर्मगोप्ता क्रियारतिः

10: दशग्रीवस्तु सर्वेषां ज्येष्ठो राक्षसपुंगवः

महोत्साहो महावीर्यो महासत्त्वपराक्रमः

11: कुम्भकर्णो बलेनासीत्सर्वेभ्योऽभ्यधिकस्तदा

मायावी रणशौण्डश्च रौद्रश्च रजनीचरः

12: खरो धनुषि विक्रान्तो ब्रह्मदिवट्पिताशनः

सिद्धविघ्नकरी चापि रौद्रा शूर्पणखा तथा

9: vibhīṣaṇastu rūpeṇa sarvebhyo'bhyadhiko'bhavat
sa babhūva mahābhāgo dharmagoptā kriyāratiḥ

10: daśagrīvastu sarveṣāṃ jyeṣṭho rākṣasapuṃgavaḥ
mahotsāho mahāvīryo mahāsattvaparākramaḥ

11: kumbhakarṇo balenāsītsarvebhyo'bhyadhikastadā
māyāvī raṇaśauṇḍaśca raudraśca rajanīcaraḥ

12: kharo dhanuṣi vikrānto brahmadviṭpiśitāśanaḥ
siddhavighnakarī cāpi raudrā śūrpaṇakhā tathā

Verse no. 9: Vibhishan excelled them all in virtues and good qualities. He did deeds that were righteous, and was always diligent in upholding the principles of Dharma. He was a pious soul who performed religious rites.

Verse no. 10: Dashagriva (i.e. Ravana) was the eldest of them all. He was a bull amongst the demons (rakshasas). He was immensely energetic, exceptionally valiant, highly spirited, and extraordinarily powerful and brave.

Verse no. 11: Kumbhakarna surpassed all of them in strength. He was a terrible stalker of the night, and a fierce warrior who was frightening in battle because of his skills at using Maya (the art of deceit, illusion and trickery).

Verse no. 12: Khar was powerful in the use of the bow. He hated Brahmins, and ate raw flesh. The terrible Shurpanakha always used to disturb sages and obstruct their religious rites.

13: सर्वे वेदविदः शूराः सर्वे सुचरितव्रताः
ऊषुः पित्रा सह रता गन्धमादनपर्वते
14: ततो वैश्रवणं तत्र ददृशुर्नरवाहनम्
पित्रा सार्धं समासीनमृद्ध्या परमया युतम्
15: जातस्पर्धास्ततस्ते तु तपसे धृतिनिश्चयाः
ब्रह्माणं तोषयामासुर्घरेण तपसा तदा

13: sarve vedavidaḥ śūrāḥ sarve sucaritavratāḥ
ūṣuḥ pitrā saha ratā gandhamādanaparvate

14: tato vaiśravaṇaṁ tatra dadṛśurnaravāhanam
pitrā sārḍhaṁ samāsīnamṛddhyā paramayā yutam

15: jātaspardhāstataste tu tapase dhṛtaniścayāḥ
brahmāṇaṁ toṣayāmāsurghoreṇa tapasā tadā

Verse no. 13: All these sons were brave and courageous, well-versed in the Vedas, and were diligent in observance of their vows. They lived harmoniously with their father on Mount Gandhamadana.

Verse no. 14: One day, they saw Vaishravana (Kuber) there. He was seated with his father (Pulastya). Vaishravana possessed great prosperity (because his other name was Kuber, the lord of the wealth and riches of this world). Wealth and opulence were evident in his demeanours. The heavenly air plane, in which he had arrived, stood nearby.

Verse no. 15: This sight filled them (Ravana and his brothers) with jealousy. They resolved to do severe penance to acquire a status that would surpass Kuber in all spheres, such as wealth, prosperity, strength and lordship of the world. In order to fulfil their wish, they did severe Tapa (rigorous penance and austerities) to please Brahma, the creator and granter of boons.

16: अतिष्ठदेकपादेन सहस्रं परिवत्सरान्

वायुभक्षो दशग्रीवः पञ्चाग्निः सुसमाहितः

17: अधःशायी कुम्भकर्णो यताहारो यतव्रतः

विभीषणः शीर्णपर्णमेकमभ्यवहारयत्

18: उपवासरतिर्धोमान्सदा जप्यपरायणः

तमेव कालमातिष्ठत्तीव्रं तप उदारधीः

19: खरः शूर्पणखा चैव तेषां वै तप्यतां तपः

परिचर्या च रक्षां च चक्रतुर्हृष्टमानसौ

16: atisṭhadekapādena sahasraṃ parivatsarān
vāyubhakṣo daśagrīvaḥ pañcāgniḥ susamāhitaḥ

17: adhaḥśāyī kumbhakarṇo yatāhāro yatavrataḥ
vibhīṣaṇaḥ śīrṇaparṇamekamabhyavahārayat

18: upavāsaratirdhīmānsadā japyaparāyaṇaḥ
tameva kālamātiṣṭhattīvraṃ tapa udāradhīḥ

19: kharāḥ sūrpaṇakhā caiva teṣāṃ vai tapyatām tapaḥ
paricaryām ca rakṣām ca cakratuḥhṛṣṭamānasau

Verse no. 16: Dashagriva stood on one foot for a thousand years. He controlled himself and sustained himself only on the wind (i.e. by breathing). To keep himself warm, he surrounded himself with five fires. {To wit, he breathed air as his only means of survival. To keep himself warm as well as part of doing severe sacrifice, he lit five pits with blazing fires all around him.}

Verse no. 17: Kumbhakarna lay down on the ground, observed severe austerity by controlling his food and strictly maintaining his vows.

Vibhishan, who was devout and pious, survived by eating dry leaves that fell on their own from the trees (one leaf a day).

Verse no. 18: Vibhishan, who was wise and pious, fasted and meditated, performing severe austerities throughout the period.

Verse no. 19: With delighted minds, Khara and Shurpanakha served them and protected them enthusiastically while the brothers (Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan) performed severe austerities and observed strict penance.

20: पूर्णे वर्षसहस्रे तु शिरश्छित्त्वा दशाननः

जुहोत्यग्नौ दुराधर्षस्तेनातुष्यज्जगत्प्रभुः

21: ततो ब्रह्मा स्वयं गत्वा तपसस्तान्न्यवारयत्

प्रलोभ्य वरदानेन सर्वानेव पृथक्पृथक्

20: pūrṇe varṣasahasre tu śiraśchittvā daśānanah
juhotyagnau durādharṣastenātuṣyajjagatprabhuḥ

21: tato brahmā svayaṃ gatvā tapasastānnyavārayat
pralobhya varadānena sarvāneva pṛthakpṛthak

Verse no. 20: When one thousand years had passed, the invincible Dashanana (i.e. Ravana), who was firm in his resolution, cut off his ten heads one by one and offered them it into the fire as offerings to please Brahma, the lord of creation, from whom he (Ravana) sought boons.

Verse no. 21: Just as he was about to cut off his tenth head, Brahma appeared before him and requested him to refrain from further austerities. Brahma also restored all his heads, and then he granted separate boons to all the three brothers as they desired.

22: ब्रह्मोवाच

22: प्रीतोऽस्मि वो निवर्तध्वं वरान्वृणुत पुत्रकाः

यद्यदिष्टमृते त्वेकममरत्वं तथास्तु तत्

23: यद्यदग्नौ हुतं सर्वं शिरस्ते महदीप्सया

तथैव तानि ते देहे भविष्यन्ति यथेप्सितम्

24: वैरूप्यं च न ते देहे कामरूपधरस्तथा

भविष्यसि रणेऽरीणां विजेतासि न संशयः

22: brahmovāca

22: prīto'smi vo nivartadhvaṃ varānvṛṇuta putrakāḥ
yadyadiṣṭamṛte tvekamamaratvaṃ tathāstu tat

23: yadyadagnau hutam sarvaṃ śiraste mahadīpsayā
tathaiva tāni te dehe bhaviṣyanti yathepsitam

24: vairūpyaṃ ca na te dehe kāmarūpadharastathā
bhaviṣyasi raṇe'rīṇāṃ vijetāsi na saṃśayaḥ

Verse no. 22: Addressing them, Brahma said: “Oh sons! Stop! I am pleased with you all. Ask for boons, except for immortality, and I will give you whatever you ask for.

Verse no. 23: {Turning to Ravana, Brahma said—} All the heads that you have offered into the fire out of your great desire to please me and get boons, all those heads will be reunited with your body.

Verse no. 24: There will be no disfigurement of your body and you will be able to assume any form that you desire. There is no doubt that you will be able to vanquish your enemies in battle.”

25: रावण उवाच

25: गन्धर्वदेवासुरतो यक्षराक्षसतस्तथा

सर्पकिंनरभूतेभ्यो न मे भूयात्पराभवः

26: ब्रह्मोवाच

26: य एते कीर्तिताः सर्वे न तेभ्योऽस्ति भयं तव

ऋते मनुष्याद्भद्रं ते तथा तद्विहितं मया

25: rāvaṇa uvāca

25: gandharvadevāsurato yakṣarākṣasatastathā
sarpakiṁnarabhūtebhyo na me bhūyātparābhavaḥ

26: brahmovāca

26: ya ete kīrtitāḥ sarve na tebhyo'sti bhayaṁ tava
ṛte manuṣyādbhadrāṁ te tathā tadvihitāṁ mayā

Verse no. 25: Ravana replied: “May I never suffer defeat at the hands of Gandharvas, Devas, Asuras, Yakshas, Rakshasas, or Kinnars.”

Verse no. 26: Brahma said: “You will have no fear from all those you have mentioned, except for man¹. Oh fortunate one, may good fortune be yours! This is the way I have ordained, and so will it be.”

[Note—¹Ravana fell for the trap. Brahma was very wise in granting the boon of invincibility to Ravana. Since Brahma knew very well that whatever that has come into existence must end one day, he wished to protect the sanctity of this fundamental principle of creation. So therefore, while granting Ravana the boon of immunity from all known powerful forces in creation, such as the Gandharvas, Devas, Asuras, Yakshas, Rakshasas and Kinnars, all of whom were many times more powerful and possessed greater abilities than ordinary human beings, Brahma left an escape route wide open by excluding a man from the list.

But under immense hurry to be granted boons, Ravana thought to himself that the poor man, who is like an ant before them, would cause no problem for him at all. If he was able to subdue the mighty ones, a human being could be as easily trampled underfoot as one fearlessly steps on a speck of dust or sand particle. So he did not pay attention to this cunning of Brahma. This single, almost inconsequential, seemingly innocuous and inconspicuous loophole in Ravana’s defensive shield would, in due

course of time, prove fatal for him, as he was finally killed by a ‘man’ known as Lord Ram. This is why when Ravana, emboldened by Brahma’s boons and believing that he has become invincible, unleashed a reign of terror and cruelty in this world, and gods prayed to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, to bring an end to this anarchy and cruelty, the Lord had to come down to earth as a ‘human being’ named Lord Ram so that Ravana could be eliminated.

Ravana could not blame Brahma for his downfall because the latter had explicitly stated while granting him boons that he would be invincible and no one would be able to get the better of him except a ‘man’.]

27: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

27: एवमुक्तो दशग्रीवस्तुष्टः समभवत्तदा

अवमेने हि दुर्बुद्धिर्मनुष्यान्पुरुषादकः

28: कुम्भकर्णमथोवाच तथैव प्रपितामहः

स वव्रे महतीं निद्रां तमसा ग्रस्तचेतनः

29: तथा भविष्यतीत्युक्त्वा विभीषणमुवाच ह

वरं वृणीष्व पुत्र त्वं प्रीतोऽस्मीति पुनः पुनः

30: विभीषण उवाच

30: परमापद्गतस्यापि नाधर्मे मे मतिर्भवेत्

अशिक्षितं च भगवन्ब्रह्मास्त्रं प्रतिभातु मे

31: ब्रह्मोवाच

31: यस्माद्राक्षसयोनौ ते जातस्यामित्रकर्शन

नाधर्मे रमते बुद्धिरमरत्वं ददामि ते

27: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

27: evamukto daśagrīvastuṣṭaḥ samabhavattadā
avamene hi durbuddhirmanuṣyānpuruṣādakaḥ

28: kumbhakarṇamathovāca tathaiva prapitāmahaḥ
sa vavre mahatīm nidrām tamasā grastacetanaḥ

29: tathā bhaviṣyatītyuktvā vibhīṣaṇamuvāca ha
varam vṛṇīṣva putra tvam prīto'smīti punaḥ punaḥ

30: vibhīṣaṇa uvāca

30: paramāpadgatasyāpi nādharme me matirbhavet
aśikṣitaṃ ca bhagavanbrahmāstraṃ pratibhātu me

31: brahmovāca

31: yasmādrākṣasayonau te jātasyāmitrakarśana
nādharme ramate buddhiramaratvaṃ dadāmi te

Verse no. 27: Markandeya said: “At these words of Brahma, Dashagriva (Ravana) was satisfied. Because of his faulty intelligence that was overshadowed by over-confidence and arrogance, the man-eating demon ignored men as he thought them to be weak and inconsequential.

Verse no. 28: In the same way, the great grandfather (Brahma) addressed Kumbhakarna, asking him to seek a boon of his desire. But since his reasoning was clouded by darkness, he stupidly asked for a long period of sleep.

Verse no. 29: Granting this, Brahma finally spoke to Vibhishan, asking him repeatedly to seek a boon: “Oh son! Ask for a boon. I am pleased with you.”

Verse no. 30: Vibhishana replied, “May my mind not turn towards anything that is contrary to Dharma; let it not go astray from the path of righteousness even in times of supreme difficulty. Oh illustrious one! May I be able to access and use the powerful weapon known as Brahmastra even without having a formal training in it.”

Verse no. 31: Brahma was mightily pleased with Vibhishan, and so he said, “On son, you will be a vanquisher of enemies. Though you are born in a family of rakshasas (demons), but your piety and devotion as well as your wish to follow the auspicious path of righteousness, propriety and probity (Dharma) has impressed me. Therefore, I am specially granting immortality to you (which I have denied to your two brothers Ravana and Kumbhakarna).”

32: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

32: राक्षसस्तु वरं लब्ध्वा दशग्रीवो विशां पते

लङ्कायाश्च्यावयामास युधि जित्वा धनेश्वरम्

33: हित्वा स भगवाँल्लङ्कामाविशद्गन्धमादनम्

गन्धर्वयक्षानुगतो रक्षःकिंपुरुषैः सह

34: विमानं पुष्पकं तस्य जहाराक्रम्य रावणः

शशाप तं वैश्रवणो न त्वामेतद्वहिष्यति

35: यस्तु त्वां समरे हन्ता तमेवैतद्वहिष्यति

अवमन्य गुरुं मां च क्षिप्रं त्वं न भविष्यसि

36: विभीषणस्तु धर्मात्मा सतां धर्ममनुस्मरन्

अन्वगच्छन्महाराज श्रिया परमया युतः

32: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

32: rākṣasastu varam labdhvā daśagrīvo viśāṃ pate
laṅkāyāścyāvayāmāsa yudhi jtvā dhaneśvaram

33: hitvā sa bhagavāṃllāṅkā māviśadgandhamādanam
gandharvayakṣānugato rakṣaḥkimpuruṣaiḥ saha

34: vimānaṃ puṣpakaṃ tasya jahārākramya rāvaṇaḥ
śaśāpa taṃ vaiśravaṇo na tvāmetadvahiṣyati

35: yastu tvāṃ samare hantā tamevaitadvahiṣyati
avamanya guruṃ mām ca kṣipraṃ tvaṃ na bhaviṣyasi

36: vibhīṣaṇastu dharmātmā satāṃ dharmamanusmaran
anvagacchanmahārāja śriyā paramayā yutaḥ

Verse no. 32: Markandeya said to Yudhisthira: “Oh lord of the earth! Having obtained this boon, rakshasa Dashagriva (i.e. Ravana) embarked on a campaign of conquest, defeating Kuber, who was the lord of riches, in a battle, drove him out of Lanka and snatched the city from him¹.

[Note—¹It was the jealousy with Kuber over the latter’s wealth and opulence that had first led Ravana to do penance to please Brahma to get boons so that he would surpass Kuber and acquire lordship over the world and its riches. So therefore, Ravana first attacked Kuber, also known as Vaishravana, to vent his wrath upon the latter and subdue him first before subduing the rest of the gods etc.]

Verse no. 33: The illustrious one (i.e. Kuber) left Lanka and went to Gandhamadana, followed by the gandharvas, the yakshas, the rakshasas and the kinnars (all of whom were his subjects).

Verse no. 34: Ravana fought and won the Pushpaka vimana (i.e. the self-driven air plane that Kuber possessed) from him. Annoyed and angry with Ravana at his reckless and arrogant ways, Vaishravana cursed him, saying ‘This will not go down well for you.’

Verse no. 35: ‘This plane will carry the one who will kill you in battle¹. Since you have treated your elder² with contempt, you will soon perish.’

[Note—¹This curse of Kuber bore fruit because when Lord Ram defeated and killed Ravana in the epic War of Lanka, he returned home to Ayodhya aboard this Pushpak plane. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 119, and Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4 where we read that Lord Ram ordered Pushpak to go back to Kuber, its rightful lord.

²Here, Kuber is referring to himself. Kuber, also called Vaishravana, and Ravana were related because they had sage Pulastya as their sire. Kuber was born earlier, so he was the elder brother of Ravana. Here we must remember that Ravana and his siblings were born out of the womb of the three female demons sent by Kuber to please Pulastya who blessed them with the boon of having sons.

There is another interpretation to this statement of Kuber. Since Vaishravana (now known as Kuber) and Vishrava were brothers, the former being the elder of the two, and Ravana and his other two brothers Kumbhakara and Vibhishan were born later, so Kuber was deemed to be the elder brother of Ravana.]

Verse no. 36: Oh great king! Vibhishan, with dharma in his soul, did not insult Kuber, but followed him by paying respect to him. The illustrious lord of the riches (i.e. Kuber) was satisfied with his younger brother Vibhishan, and granted him grace.

37: तस्मै स भगवांस्तुष्टो भ्राता भ्रात्रे धनेश्वरः

सेनापत्यं ददौ धीमान्यक्षराक्षसेनयोः

38: राक्षसाः पुरुषादाश्च पिशाचाश्च महाबलाः

सर्वे समेत्य राजानमभ्यषिञ्चद्वशाननम्

39: दशग्रीवस्तु दैत्यानां देवानां च बलोत्कटः

आक्रम्य रत्नान्यहरत्कामरूपी विहंगमः

40: रावयामास लोकान्यत्तस्माद्रावण उच्यते

दशग्रीवः कामबलो देवानां भयमादधत्

37: tasmai sa bhagavāṁstuṣṭo bhrātā bhrātre dhaneśvaraḥ
senāpatyaṁ dadau dhīmānyakṣarākṣasasenayoḥ

38: rākṣasāḥ puruṣādāśca piśācāśca mahābalāḥ
sarve sametya rājānamabhyaṣiñcaddaśānanam

39: daśagrīvastu daityānāṁ devānāṁ ca balotkaṭaḥ
ākramya ratnānyaharatkāmarūpī vihaṅgamaḥ

40: rāvayāmāsa lokānyattasmādrāvaṇa ucyate
daśagrīvaḥ kāmabalo devānāṁ bhayamādadhat

Verse no. 37: The wise Kuber, who was pleased with Vibhishan, made him the general (commander) of the armies of both the yakshas and the rakshasas.

Verse no. 38: Meanwhile, all the powerful man-eating rakshasas and pishachas assembled and unanimously installed Dashanana (Ravana) as their king.

Verse no. 39: Dashagriva could assume any form at will and travel through the sky. Intoxicated with his strength, he attacked the daityas and the gods and robbed them all of their wealth.

Verse no. 40: Because he made the worlds scream by his terrorising tactics, he came to be known as ‘Ravana’—the one who makes others cry. Dashagriva, driven mad by his unmatched strength and reckless desires, struck fear in the hearts of gods.”

Thus ends Canto 259.

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Canto 260:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततो ब्रह्मर्षयः सिद्धा देवराजर्षयस्तथा
हव्यवाहं पुरस्कृत्य ब्रह्माणं शरणं गताः

2: अग्निरुवाच

2: यः स विश्रवसः पुत्रो दशग्रीवो महाबलः
अवध्यो वरदानेन कृतो भगवता पुरा
3: स बाधते प्रजाः सर्वा विप्रकारैर्महाबलः
ततो नस्त्रातु भगवन्नान्यस्त्राता हि विद्यते

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tato brahmarṣayaḥ siddhā devarājarṣayastathā
havyavāhaṁ puraskṛtya brahmāṇaṁ śaraṇaṁ gatāḥ

2: agniruvāca

2: yaḥ sa viśravasaḥ putro daśagrīvo mahābalaḥ
avadhyo varadānena kṛto bhagavatā purā
3: sa bādgate prajāḥ sarvā viprakārairmahābalaḥ
tato nastrātu bhagavannānyastrātā hi vidyate

{This passage forms the basis for the part of the story of the Ramayana that describes as to why all the divine forces joined hands against Ravana, and this included Lord Vishnu too who assumed the form of a human being named Lord Ram to wage a war against Ravana and his forces in order to eliminate this scourge from the world. In this preparation against Ravana, all the gods and their juniors assumed the forms of monkeys and bears whom Ravana would least suspect to be of any harm to him. They assisted Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram to successfully achieve the objective of getting rid of the terror of Ravana.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: “Fed up with the terror unleashed by Ravana, all the brahmarshis, siddhas and devarshis, with Agni (the Fire God) leading them, went and sought refuge with Brahma.

Verse no. 2: Agni said: “Oh lord! Vishrava's mighty son named Dashagriva (Ravana) is immensely strong and cannot be killed because you have earlier granted him a boon.

Verse no. 3: This fellow is invincible and profoundly powerful and strong. Confident that no harm can come to him due to your boons, he has gone berserk in the world,

oppressing all beings and causing injury to one and all with his cruelty and terrorising acts. Oh lord! Save and protect us from him. There is no one else who can save us.”

4: ब्रह्मोवाच

4: न स देवासुरैः शक्यो युद्धे जेतुं विभावसो
विहितं तत्र यत्कार्यमभितस्तस्य निग्रहे
5: तदर्थमवतीर्णोऽसौ मन्नियोगाच्चतुर्भुजः
विष्णुः प्रहरतां श्रेष्ठः स कर्मैतत्करिष्यति

4: brahmovāca

4: na sa devāsuraiḥ śakyo yuddhe jetuṃ vibhāvaso
vihitaṃ tatra yatkāryamabhitastasya nigrahe

5: tadarthamavatīrṇo'sau manniyogāccaturbhujah
viṣṇuḥ praharatāṃ śreṣṭhaḥ sa karmaitatkarīṣyati

Verse no. 4: Brahma replied: “Oh Fire God (vibhāvaso)! The gods and the asuras cannot defeat him in battle. The plan to subdue him (Ravana) has already been decided and will now be put into practice.

Verse no. 5: For that purpose, at my request, the four-armed Lord Vishnu, foremost among warriors and brave, has already descended on earth. He will accomplish this task.”

6: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

6: पितामहस्ततस्तेषां संनिधौ वाक्यमब्रवीत्
सर्वैर्देवगणैः सार्धं संभवध्वं महीतले
7: विष्णोः सहायानृक्षीषु वानरीषु च सर्वशः
जनयध्वं सुतान्वीरान्कामरूपबलान्वितान्
8: ततो भागानुभागेन देवगन्धर्वदानवाः
अवतर्तुं महीं सर्वे रञ्जयामासुरञ्जसा

6: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

6: pitāmahastatasteṣāṃ saṃnidhau vākyamabravīt
sarvairdevagaṇaiḥ sārddhaṃ saṃbhavadhvaṃ mahītale

7: viṣṇoḥ sahāyānr̥kṣīṣu vānarīṣu ca sarvaśaḥ
janayadhvaṃ sutānvīrāṅkāmarūpabalānvitān

8: tato bhāgānubhāgena devagandharvadānavāḥ
avatartuṃ mahīṃ sarve rañjayāmāsurañjasā

Verse no. 6: Markandeya said: “The grandfather Brahma addressed told the assembly of gods: ‘All of you must go and take births on earth.

Verse no. 7: To aid Lord Vishnu, all of you beget brave sons in the form of monkeys and bears who would be very strong and capable of assuming any form at will.’

Verse no. 8: At this, all the gods, the gandharvas and serpents happily descended on earth, and they procreated to produce off-springs who had all the qualities such as, inter alia, strength, valour and abilities as their parent gods possessed.

9: तेषां समक्षं गन्धर्वी दुन्दुभी नाम नामतः
शशास वरदो देवो देवकार्यार्थसिद्धये
10: पितामहवचः श्रुत्वा गन्धर्वी दुन्दुभी ततः
मन्थरा मानुषे लोके कुब्जा समभवत्तदा

9: teṣāṃ samakṣaṃ gandharvīṃ dundubhīṃ nāma nāmataḥ
śaśāsa varado devo devakāryārthasiddhaye

10: pitāmahavacaḥ śrutvā gandharvī dundubhī tataḥ
mantharā mānuṣe loke kubjā samabhavattadā

Verse no. 9: In their presence, the god who is the granter of boons, i.e. Brahma, instructed a gandharva lady (a celestial maiden) named Dundubhi to aid the gods accomplish their task by going to earth and taking birth there.

Verse no. 10: On the instructions of the grandfather Brahma, the gandharvi Dundubhi took the form of Manthara¹ in the mortal world. She was hunchbacked.

[Note—¹Manthara became a trusted maid of Kaikeyi, the queen of Dashrath. It was Manthara who had prevailed upon Kaikeyi to arrange sending Lord Ram to the forest as a prelude to the war against Ravana and his elimination so that the work of the gods could be accomplished.]

11: शक्रप्रभृतयश्चैव सर्वे ते सुरसत्तमाः
वानरर्क्षवरस्त्रीषु जनयामासुरात्मजान्
तेऽन्ववर्तन्पितृन्सर्वे यशसा च बलेन च
12: भेत्तारो गिरिशृङ्गाणां शालतालशिलायुधाः
वज्रसंहननाः सर्वे सर्वे चौघबलास्तथा

13: कामवीर्यधराश्चैव सर्वे युद्धविशारदाः

नागायुतसमप्राणा वायुवेगसमा जवे

यत्रेच्छकनिवासाश्च केचिदत्र वनौकसः

11: śakraprabhṛtayaścaiva sarve te surasattamāḥ
vānararkṣavarāstrīṣu janayāmāsurātmajān
te'nvavartanpitṛnsarve yaśasā ca balena ca

12: bhettāro giriśṛṅgāṇām śālatālaśilāyudhāḥ
vajrasaṃhananāḥ sarve sarve caughabalāstathā

13: kāmavīryadharāścaiva sarve yuddhaviśārādāḥ
nāgāyutasamaprāṇā vāyuvegasamā jave
yatrecchakanivāsāśca kecidatra vanaukaśaḥ

Verse no. 11: At the instructions of Brahma, all the chief gods in the pantheon of gods, led by Indra (Shakra), begot sons through the chief amongst the females of the monkey and bear races on earth. These off-springs were like their fathers (the chief gods) inasmuch as they inherited the strengths and abilities as well as valour and glory of these gods.

Verse no. 12: They could shatter the peaks of mountains. They wielded weapons consisting of huge tree trunks and large rocks. Their bodies were so strong that they could easily withstand any kind of attack from even the hardest and strongest weapon in existence so much so that even Vajra (the weapon of Indra which is regarded as being made of the strongest and hardest material in existence) would have no effect on them.

Verse no. 13: They could multiply their strength and valour many times over if they so wished. They had stupendous energy, and were skilled in fighting. Each of them had the strength and power of a thousand wild elephants, and were as swift as the wind in their movement. They lived over a wide swathe of land wherever they wished and found it convenient (in the forested areas south of the Vindhya range of mountains, all around the kingdom of Kishkindha, extending upto the shore of the southern ocean). {This is a rough geographical area covering almost half of the Indian subcontinent in the south. These monkeys and bears were not only restricted here, but they also spread to other parts of the land, chiefly in the forested, hilly and mountainous regions all over the land mass.}

14: एवं विधाय तत्सर्वं भगवाँल्लोकभावनः

मन्थरां बोधयामास यद्यत्कार्यं यथा यथा

15: सा तद्वचनमाज्ञाय तथा चक्रे मनोजवा

इतश्चेतश्च गच्छन्ती वैरसंधुक्षणे रता

14: evaṃ vidhāya tatsarvaṃ bhagavāṃllokabhāvanāḥ
mantharāṃ bodhayāmāsa yadyatkāryaṃ yathā yathā

15: sā tadvacanamājñāya tathā cakre manojavā
itaścetaśca gacchantī vairasaṃdhuḥṣaṇe ratā

Verse no. 14: Having thus instructed the gods who carried out his orders forthwith, the creator Brahma then turned to Manthara and instructed her what to do and how to successfully do her job. {As we have already read herein above, Manthara was a female gandharva named Dundubhi. Refer verse nos. 9-10.}

Verse no. 15: On hearing Brahma's words, she carried them out with the speed of the mind—i.e. immediately, with great haste, without wasting any time. With clear backing of Brahma and the gods, she went about her assigned job to create enmity and suspicion all around with urgency. {As the story continues, we shall read that she was the one who instigated Kaikeyi into sending Lord Ram, who actually was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, to the forest so that the job of the gods, which was the elimination of Ravana and his cruel demon race, could be successfully accomplished. She sowed the seed of enmity in the mind of Kaikeyi by tactfully employing suspicion and doubt to make her convinced that if Lord Ram was anointed as the king of Ayodhya, her own son Bharat would have to work under him like a slave or a subordinate courtier, and she herself would be relegated to the background as one other woman in the royal household, thereby robbing her of all her present privileges and honour. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 23.}

Thus ends Canto 260.

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Canto 261:

{This Canto narrates in brief two chapters in the beginning of the Ramayana, i.e. Baal Kand and Ayodhya Kand. In the Baal Kand we read about the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers, as well as their marriage. In Ayodhya Kand we read about king Dashrath's intention of crowning Lord Ram as the crown prince of Ayodhya to succeed him after his death. This decision of Dashrath sparked a chain of intrigues led by Manthara, and put into effect by Kaikeyi who prevailed upon her husband, king Dashrath, to send Lord Ram to forest exile.}

1: युधिष्ठिर उवाच

1: उक्तं भगवता जन्म रामादीनां पृथक्पृथक्

प्रस्थानकारणं ब्रह्मश्रोतुमिच्छामि कथ्यताम्

2: कथं दाशरथी वीरौ भ्रातरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ

प्रस्थापितौ वनं ब्रह्म मैथिली च यशस्विनी

1: yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

1: uktaṃ bhagavatā janma rāmādināṃ pṛthakpṛthak
prasthānakāraṇaṃ brahmañśrotumicchāmi kathyatām

2: kathaṃ dāśarathī vīrau bhrātarau rāmalakṣmaṇau
prasthāpitau vanaṃ brahma maithilī ca yaśasvinī

Verse no. 1: Yudhishtira said to sage Markandeya: “On illustrious sage! You have separately related the births of Lord Ram and his brothers (as well as Ravana and his siblings). Oh learned Brahmin! Now I wish to hear about the reasons for Lord Ram’s forest exile.

Verse no. 2: Please recount it. Oh learned Brahmin! Why were Dashrath's brave sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, and the honourable Sita (known also as Maithili because she was the daughter of the king of Mithila) were sent to exile in the forest.”

3: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

3: जातपुत्रो दशरथः प्रीतिमानभवन्नृपः

क्रियारतिर्धर्मपरः सततं वृद्धसेविता

4: क्रमेण चास्य ते पुत्रा व्यवर्धन्त महौजसः

वेदेषु सरहस्येषु धनुर्वेदे च पारगाः

5: चरितब्रह्मचर्यास्ते कृतदाराश्च पार्थिव

यदा तदा दशरथः प्रीतिमानभवत्सुखी

6: ज्येष्ठो रामोऽभवत्तेषां रमयामास हि प्रजाः

मनोहरतया धीमान्पितुर्हृदयतोषणः

7: ततः स राजा मतिमान्मत्वात्मानं वयोऽधिकम्

मन्त्रयामास सचिवैर्धर्मज्ञैश्च पुरोहितैः

8: अभिषेकाय रामस्य यौवराज्येन भारत

प्राप्तकालं च ते सर्वे मेनिरे मन्त्रिसत्तमाः

3: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

3: jātaputro daśarathaḥ prītimānabhavannṛpaḥ
kriyāratirdharmaparaḥ satataṃ vṛddhasevitā

4: krameṇa cāśya te putrā vyavardhanta mahaujaśaḥ
vedeṣu sarahasyeṣu dhanurvede ca pāragāḥ

5: caritabrahmacaryāste kṛtadārāśca pārthiva
yadā tadā daśarathaḥ prītimānabhavatsukhī

6: jyeṣṭho rāmo'bhavatteṣāṃ ramayāmāsa hi prajāḥ
manoharatayā dhīmānpiturhṛdayatoṣaṇaḥ

7: tataḥ sa rājā matimānmatvātmānaṃ vayo'dhikam
mantrayāmāsa sacivairdharmajñāisca purohitaiḥ

8: abhiṣekāya rāmasya yauvarājyena bhārata
prāptakālaṃ ca te sarve menire mantrisattamāḥ

Verse no. 3: Markandeya replied: “King Dashrath was delighted when he was blessed with sons¹. The king was devoted to performing religious sacrifices and their accompanying rituals. He was a diligent in following the path of Dharma. He always served his superiors and Brahmins.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 193.]

Verse no. 4: In course of time, his sons grew up to become able and energetic youths. They became learned in the Vedas and sacred texts, and became experts in archery and use of different kinds of weapons².

[Note--²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 204.]

Verse no. 5: Oh king! When the four brothers had completed the period of brahmacharya (the early period of life when boys practice celibacy), they got married³. During each such phase in the early childhood and adolescent days of the brothers, right from their birth till their marriage, their father, king Dashrath used to be very happy and pleased.

[Note--³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 325 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.]

Verse no. 6: Among them, the eldest was Lord Ram, and he was very much liked by the subjects of the kingdom due to his courteous manners and amiable character. Everyone loved him⁴. He was exceptionally charming, and delighted his father's heart⁵.

[Note--⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 200.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 193.]

Verse nos. 7-8: Then the king thought that he was too advanced in age. He consulted his advisers and the priests, who were learned about dharma and statecraft. The king wished to install Lord Ram as the heir apparent⁶. Oh descendant of the Bharata lineage (i.e. Yudhisthira)! All of them, the best of advisers, thought that the appropriate time had arrived for anointment of Lord Ram to the throne of Ayodhya.

[Note--⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Doha no. 4.]

9: लोहिताक्षं महाबाहुं मत्तमातङ्गगामिनम्
दीर्घबाहुं महोरस्कं नीलकुञ्चितमूर्धजम्
10: दीप्यमानं श्रिया वीरं शक्रादनवमं बले
पारगं सर्वधर्माणां बृहस्पतिसमं मतौ
11: सर्वानुरक्तप्रकृतिं सर्वविद्याविशारदम्
जितेन्द्रियममित्राणामपि दृष्टिमनोहरम्
12: नियन्तारमसाधूनां गोप्तारं धर्मचारिणाम्
धृतिमन्तमनाधृष्यं जेतारमपराजितम्

9: lohitākṣaṃ mahābāhuṃ mattamātaṅgagāminam
dīrghabāhuṃ mahoraskaṃ nīlakuñcitamūrdhajam

10: dīpyamānaṃ śriyā vīraṃ śakrādanavamam bale
pāragam sarvadharmāṇām br̥haspatisamam matau

11: sarvānuraktaprakṛtiṃ sarvavidyāviśāradam
jitendriyamamitrāṇāmapi dṛṣṭimanoharam

12: niyantāramasādhūnām goptāram dharmacāriṇām
dhṛtimantamanādhr̥ṣyam jetāramaparājitam

{The following verses outline the magnificent and most charming personality of Lord Ram who appealed to one and all; he was loved by his subjects, and everyone admired him. He was handsome and elegant as well as courteous and welcoming.}

Verse no. 9: His eyes were pink or light red in hue (indicative of robust health). His arms were long and muscular (indicating his ability to afford protection to everyone who sought refuge with him). His elegant gait was like that of an adult and proud male elephant. He had a broad chest. He was dark in complexion. His hairs were curled, giving his face a very captivating look.

Verse no. 10: He was radiant, handsome and brave. He was like Shakra (Indra, the king of gods) in his strength. He was learned in all dharma. He was as wise and intelligent as Brihaspati (the patron god of knowledge and the advisor of gods; he is also known as the Guru of gods, and is represented by the planet Jupiter).

Verse no. 11: Everyone was devoted to him; everyone admired him and loved him. He was skilled in all forms of knowledge and accomplished in all arts. He was in control of his senses. He was pleasant to behold, even to his enemies; his personality was magnificent and most charming.

Verse no. 12: He was a protector of the virtuous, and a restrainer of those who were wicked and unrighteous. He protected those who followed dharma (i.e. the followers of the principles of righteousness, probity, propriety, goodness of conduct and thought, and upholders of auspicious values). He had fortitude and resilience. He was resolute and unassailable. He was victorious and invincible. He could not be vanquished by anyone no matter how powerful his adversary might be.

13: पुत्रं राजा दशरथः कौसल्यानन्दवर्धनम्
सदृश्य परमां प्रीतिमगच्छत्कुरुनन्दन
14: चिन्तयंश्च महातेजा गुणान्नामस्य वीर्यवान्
अभ्यभाषत भद्रं ते प्रीयमाणः पुरोहितम्
15: अद्य पुष्यो निशि ब्रह्मन्पुण्यं योगमुपैष्यति
संभाराः संभ्रियन्तां मे रामश्चोपनिमन्त्र्यताम्

13: putraṃ rājā daśarathaḥ kausalyānandavardhanam
saṃdrśya paramāṃ prītimagacchatkurunandana

14: cintayaṃśca mahātejā guṇānrāmasya vīryavān
abhyabhāṣata bhadraṃ te prīyamāṇaḥ purohitam

15: adya puṣyo niśi brahmanpuṇyaṃ yogamupaiṣyati
saṃbhārāḥ saṃbhriyantāṃ me rāmaścopanimantryatām

Verse no. 13: Oh descendant of the Kuru lineage (a reference to Yudhisthira)! King Dashrath looked with delight at his son (Lord Ram) who provided an extreme sense of joy and happiness both to his mother Kaushalya as well as to his father king Dashrath.

Verse no. 14: On thinking or reflecting about the qualities and virtues of the valorous and immensely energetic Lord Ram, king Dashrath approached his family priest (sage Vashistha) and happily spoke to him with high spirits and a lot of enthusiasm as follows—

Verse no. 15: “Oh wise and learned Brahmin! There is an auspicious conjunction of Pushya nakshatra (a planetary position of stars) today, when the auspicious time is there for anointment of Lord Ram as my heir and the next king of the kingdom. So please advise accordingly that all necessary preparations can be made and things for this auspicious event may be arranged and collected forthwith¹.”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 2—to Doha no. 5.]

16: इति तद्राजवचनं प्रतिश्रुत्याथ मन्थरा
कैकेयीमभिगम्येदं काले वचनमब्रवीत्

17: अद्य कैकेयि दौर्भाग्यं राज्ञा ते ख्यापितं महत्
 आशीविषस्त्वां संक्रुद्धश्चण्डो दशति दुर्भगे
 18: सुभगा खलु कौसल्या यस्याः पुत्रोऽभिषेक्ष्यते
 कुतो हि तव सौभाग्यं यस्याः पुत्रो न राज्यभाक्

16: iti tadrājavacanam pratiśrutyātha mantharā
 kaikeyīmabhogamyedam kāle vacanamabravīt

17: adya kaikeyi daurbhāgyam rājñā te khyāpitam mahat
 āśīviṣastvām samkruddhaścaṇḍo daśati durbhage

18: subhagā khalu kausalyā yasyāḥ putro'bhiṣeksyate
 kuto hi tava saubhāgyam yasyāḥ putro na rājyabhāk

{The following verses briefly narrate the intrigue and the conspiracy hatched by Manthra to carry out her mandate as instructed by Lord Brahma so that Lord Ram could go to the forest as destined by the Creator to eliminate the demons led by Ravana who had been tormenting the gods. Refer: Canto 260, verse nos. 9-15.}

Verse no. 16: When this news reached Manthara (the hunchback maid of Kaikeyi), she immediately went to her mistress Kaikeyi and, after gaining her confidence (as she was always close to Kaikeyi and the latter trusted her), she spoke as follows—

Verse no. 17: “Oh Kaikeyi! The king has proclaimed your great misfortune today. Oh you unfortunate lady! A fierce, angry and virulent serpent is ready to bite you (and you are totally oblivious of the danger lurking behind your back).

Verse no. 18: Kaushalya is indeed the fortunate one, since her son (Lord Ram) will be installed on the throne of the kingdom. Where is your good fortune if your son (Bharat) does not get a share of the kingdom?”

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 22.

Though it is not explicitly mentioned here, but Manthara instigated Kaikeyi to go and force her husband, king Dashrath, to appoint Bharat (her son) as the heir-apparent and send Lord Ram to the forest so that he cannot interfere in Bharat's anointment to the throne. Kaikeyi bit the bait, and what followed was complete chaos. A pall of gloom descended on Ayodhya, and what was supposed to be an occasion of celebration was transformed into a state of mourning, shocked dismay and extreme distress, for not only was Lord Ram sent to the forest for fourteen years along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, but the king himself died due to shock and grief.]

19: सा तद्वचनमाज्ञाय सर्वाभरणभूषिता
 वेदीविलग्नमध्येव बिभ्रती रूपमुत्तमम्
 20: विविक्ते पतिमासाद्य हसन्तीव शुचिस्मिता
 प्रणयं व्यञ्जयन्तीव मधुरं वाक्यमब्रवीत्

21: सत्यप्रतिज्ञं यन्मे त्वं काममेकं निसृष्टवान्
उपाकुरुष्व तद्राजंस्तस्मान्मुच्यस्व संकटात्

19: sā tadvacanamājñāya sarvābharanabhūṣitā
vedīvilagnamadhyeva bibhratī rūpamuttamam

20: vivikte patimāsādyā hasantīva śucismitā
praṇayaṃ vyañjayantīva madhuraṃ vākyamabravīt

21: satyapratijñā yanme tvaṃ kāmamekaṃ nirsṛṣṭavān
upākuruṣva tadrājaṃstasmānmucyasva saṃkaṭāt

Verse no. 19: On hearing these words, Kaikeyi adorned herself in all her fine ornaments. She was radiant in her supreme beauty. She, metaphorically, looked like a decked-up altar that has been made ready for a sacrifice in the midst of a ceremony.

Verse no. 20: She approached her husband in private. Smiling charmingly as if she was full of love for him, she spoke very sweetly and used her physical charm to launch an offensive against the unsuspecting king. {Kaikeyi employed all the cunning she could muster and used to the hilt the charming demeanours at her command to entice king Dashrath to willingly fall into the trap she laid for him. The king did not realise, as fate ordained, what horrible thing was in store for him in the coming moments.}

Verse no. 21: Kaikeyi said to him: “Oh great king! You are always truthful in upholding your promises. You had earlier promised me a wish. Grant me that favour now and free yourself of the burden.¹”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 27 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

22: राजोवाच

22: वरं ददानि ते हन्त तद्गृहाण यदिच्छसि
अवध्यो वध्यतां कोऽद्य वध्यः कोऽद्य विमुच्यताम्
23: धनं ददानि कस्याद्य ह्रियतां कस्य वा पुनः
ब्राह्मणस्वादिहान्यत्र यत्किञ्चिद्वित्तमस्ति मे

22: rājovāca

22: varaṃ dadāni te hanta tadgrhāṇa yadicchasi
avadhyo vadhyatām ko'dya vadhyaḥ ko'dya vimucyatām

23: dhanam dadāni kasyādyā hriyatām kasya vā punaḥ
brāhmaṇasvādihānyatra yatkiṃcidvittamasti me

{The following verses narrate events from the Ramayana focusing on Lord Ram's, king Dashrath's death, Bharat's refusal to accept the throne, and Lord Ram's embarking on a journey into the forest.}

Verse no. 22: The king replied, "I am ready to grant you the boon. You will get what you desire. Is there anyone who must be killed today, though he does not deserve to be killed? Is there any one imprisoned, who must be freed today?"

Verse no. 23: Who should be given riches today? Or is there anyone, from whom it must be taken away? All the riches are mine, except those that belong to the Brahmins."

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 26.]

24: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

24: सा तद्वचनमाज्ञाय परिगृह्य नराधिपम्
आत्मनो बलमाज्ञाय तत एनमुवाच ह

25: आभिषेचनिकं यत्ते रामार्थमुपकल्पितम्
भरतस्तदवाप्नोतु वनं गच्छतु राघवः

26: स तद्राजा वचः श्रुत्वा विप्रियं दारुणोदयम्
दुःखार्तो भरतश्रेष्ठ न किञ्चिद्व्याजहार ह

24: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

24: sā tadvacanamājñāya parigrhya narādhīpam
ātmano balamājñāya tata enamuvāca ha

25: ābhiṣecanikaṃ yatte rāmārthamupakalpitaṃ
bharatastadavāpnotu vanaṃ gacchatu rāghavaḥ

26: sa tadrājā vacaḥ śrutvā vipriyaṃ dāruṇodayam
duḥkhārto bharataśreṣṭha na kiṃcidvyājahāra ha

Verse no. 24: Markandeya said: "When Kaikeyi heard these words, she bound the king to his promise. Knowing that she now has an upper hand over the king (because he cannot go back on his words once he has promised to fulfil them)¹, she spoke with confidence as follows—

Verse no. 25: "Let Bharat be anointed on the throne of the kingdom with the ingredients that have been arranged for the purpose of appointing Lord Ram as the heir. And at the same time, Raghav (i.e. Lord Ram) must go to the forest."²

Verse no. 26: The king heard these unpleasant and harsh words of Kaikeyi. Oh foremost among the Bharat lineage (i.e. Yudhisthira)! He was so miserable and

shocked that he became numbed and speechless with overwhelming grief, unable to say anything³.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 28.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 29.]

27: ततस्तथोक्तं पितरं रामो विज्ञाय वीर्यवान्
वनं प्रतस्थे धर्मात्मा राजा सत्यो भवत्विति

28: तमन्वगच्छलक्ष्मीवान्धनुष्माल्लक्ष्मणस्तदा
सीता च भार्या भद्रं ते वैदेही जनकात्मजा

27: tatastathoktaṁ pitaraṁ rāmo vijñāya vīryavān
vanaṁ pratasthe dharmātmā rājā satyo bhavatviti

28: tamanvagacchallakṣmīvāndhanuṣmāṁllakṣmaṇastadā
sītā ca bhāryā bhadraṁ te vaidehī janakātmajā

Verse no. 27: On learning what his father had promised to Kaikeyi, the most righteous, brave and courageous Lord Ram, with Dharma in his soul, decided to proceed to the forest willingly, so that the king might remain true to his promise¹.

Verse no. 28: Oh fortunate one (i.e. Yudhisthira)! He was followed by his valiant and glorious brother Laxman, with the bow in his hand, and his wife Vaidehi (Sita), the virtuous daughter of king Janak².

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46; (c) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 53.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 68 (Sita gets Lord Ram's consent to accompany him to the forest); (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 73 (Laxman too gets Lord Ram's consent to accompany him to the forest); and (c) Doha no. 79 (Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman leave for the forest).]

29: ततो वनं गते रामे राजा दशरथस्तदा
समयुज्यत देहस्य कालपर्यायधर्मणा

30: रामं तु गतमाज्ञाय राजानं च तथागतम्
 आनाय्य भरतं देवी कैकेयी वाक्यमब्रवीत्
 31: गतो दशरथः स्वर्गं वनस्थौ रामलक्ष्मणौ
 गृहाण राज्यं विपुलं क्षेमं निहतकण्टकम्

29: tato vanam gate rāme rājā daśarathastadā
 samayujyata dehasya kālaparyāyadharmanā

30: rāmaṃ tu gatamājñāya rājānaṃ ca tathāgatam
 ānāyya bharataṃ devī kaikeyī vākyaṃabravīt

31: gato daśarathaḥ svargaṃ vanasthau rāmalakṣmaṇau
 grhāṇa rājyaṃ vipulaṃ kṣemaṃ nihatakaṇṭakam

Verse no. 29: When Lord Ram had departed for the forest, the grief was too much for king Dashrath to bear, and so he gave up his ghost (i.e. he died), leaving behind his mortal dead body¹.

Verse no. 30: With Lord Ram having left and the king having departed, queen Kaikeyi summoned Bharat (her son) and spoke these words to him—

Verse no. 31: “Listen dear son, Dashrath has gone to heaven; and Ram and Laxman have left for the forest. All thorns or obstacles to your ascension to the throne of this mighty and large kingdom (of Ayodhya) have thus been removed. The decks are now clear for you to accept the crown without facing any opposition.²”

[Note—The following verses focus on Bharat’s grief, his attempt to bring Lord Ram back from the forest, and Ram’s reluctance to do so as it would be against the principles of Dharma to disobey his father’s commands, especially when he is dead.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 160—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 161.]

32: तामुवाच स धर्मात्मा नृशंसं बत ते कृतम्
 पतिं हत्वा कुलं चेदमुत्साद्य धनलुब्धया
 33: अयशः पातयित्वा मे मूर्ध्नि त्वं कुलपांसने
 सकामा भव मे मातरित्युक्त्वा प्ररुद ह
 34: स चारित्रं विशोऽध्याथ सर्वप्रकृतिसंनिधौ
 अन्वयाद्भ्रातरं रामं विनिवर्तनलालसः

32: tāmuvāca sa dharmātmā nṛśaṃsaṃ bata te kṛtam
patiṃ hatvā kulam cedamutsādyā dhanalubdhayā

33: ayaśaḥ pātayitvā me mūrdhni tvam kulapāṃsane
sakāmā bhava me mātarityuktvā praruroda ha

34: sa cāritram viśodhyātha sarvaprakṛtiṣaṃnidhau
anvayādbhrātaram rāmaṃ vinivartanalālasaḥ

Verse no. 32: On hearing these shocking words of his mother Kaikeyi, Bharat, who had a pure and pious heart, and who was as strict a follower of Dharma as his elder brother Lord Ram, was aghast and crestfallen. Deeply affected, he scolded his mother in caustic and vehement terms: “You have committed a violent and unforgivable cruel deed. Out of avarice for riches and driven by a malicious heart bent on ruining the family and its great reputation in your greed for power and throne, you have done something that would go down the annals of history as the most notorious and mischievous deed that anyone in this family would have even thought of doing. You have killed your husband and destroyed this lineage.

Verse no. 33: Oh cruel mother! Oh destroyer of the great reputation of this honourable family! You have brought the worst of infamy on my head. You have tarnished my reputation and brought dishonour to me. Oh you wicked soul, not satisfy your desire. {This of course was said in sarcasm. Kaikeyi wanted Bharat to ascend the throne, but Bharat now rebukes her sternly by not only denouncing her but also telling her in a taunting voice that her wish to make him ascend the throne is rejected by him outright. Now therefore, she should prepare to enjoy a life-time of ignominy and hatred by all, and enjoy herself at putting her son in a bind of regret, grief and ill-fame for all times to come.}¹”

Speaking thus, Bharat began to weep and lament bitterly².

Verse no. 34: Thus displaying his noble and spotless character before all the subjects and ministers of the kingdom (with his decision not to accept the crown that rightly belonged to Lord Ram, everyone developed great respect for Bharat after all misunderstandings about him being complicit in his mother’s evil scheme to grab the crown were removed)³, Bharat left for the forest to bring his brother Lord Ram back home⁴.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Doha no. 162.

²In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, we read that after bitterly scolding Kaikeyi, Bharat went to meet Kaushalya, Lord Ram’s benevolent mother. The two embraced each other most affectionately, lamented and grieved together, and Bharat wept the agony of his heart out before Kaushalya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 163—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 169.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (a) Doha no. 182—to Doha no. 183; (b) Doha no. 184; (c) Doha no. 187.]

35: कौसल्यां च सुमित्रां च कैकेयीं च सुदुःखितः

अग्रे प्रस्थाप्य यानैः स शत्रुघ्नसहितो ययौ

36: वसिष्ठवामदेवाभ्यां विप्रैश्चान्यैः सहस्रशः

पौरजानपदैः सार्धं रामानयनकाङ्क्षया

35: kausalyām ca sumitrām ca kaikeyīm ca suduḥkhiṭaḥ

agre prasthāpya yānaiḥ sa śatrughnasahito yayau

36: vasiṣṭhavāmadevābhyām vipraiścānyaiḥ sahasraśaḥ

paurajānapadaiḥ sārḍham rāmānayanakāṅkṣayā

Verse no. 35: He placed Kaushalya, Sumitra and the deeply regretting Kaikeyi in chariots to accompany the procession to meet Lord Ram in the forest. Bharat, who was extremely miserable and distressed, himself followed with his brother Shatrughan.

Verse no. 36: Learned sages of the kingdom, such as Vashistha and Vamdeo, along with thousands of other Brahmins and citizens, both commoners and seniors, set out on a journey with a sincere desire to see Lord Ram and bring him home from the forest¹.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 188.]

37: ददर्श चित्रकूटस्थं स रामं सहलक्ष्मणम्

तापसानामलंकारं धारयन्तं धनुर्धरम्

38: विसर्जितः स रामेण पितुर्वचनकारिणा

नन्दिग्रामेऽकरोद्राज्यं पुरस्कृत्यास्य पादुके

37: dadarśa citrakūṭasthaṁ sa rāmaṁ sahalakṣmaṇam

tāpasānāmalaṁkāraṁ dhārayantaṁ dhanurdharam

38: visarjitaḥ sa rāmeṇa piturvacanakāriṇā

nandigrāme'karodrājyaṁ puraskṛtyāsyā pāduke

Verse no. 37: They saw (“dadarśa”; i.e. met) Lord Ram and Laxman in Chitrakoot¹. The two brothers had bows in their hands and looked glorious in the attire of hermits.

Verse no. 38: But Lord Ram, who was exceptionally righteous and a strict follower of Dharma, was determined to carry out the orders of his father (according to which he was to live as an ascetic in the forest for fourteen years)¹. With his mind fixed on

making his father's promise come true, Lord Ram politely and affectionately prevailed upon Bharat to return home and wait out the period².

Thus, Bharat returned to Ayodhya and installed Lord Ram's sandals on the throne in a symbolic gesture of making the Lord as the king. {Lord Ram's sandals were put on the throne as a symbol of Lord Ram's authority.}

After that, Bharat retired to a nearby place called Nandigram on the outskirts of Ayodhya, and carried out his duties of governing the kingdom from there, but he did so on behalf of Lord Ram³.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Doha no. 245.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 306.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (a) Doha no. 316 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (b) Doha no. 323—to Doha no. 325.]

39: रामस्तु पुनराशङ्क्य पौरजानपदागमम्

प्रविवेश महारण्यं शरभङ्गाश्रमं प्रति

40: सत्कृत्य शरभङ्गं स दण्डकारण्यमाश्रितः

नदीं गोदावरीं रम्यामाश्रित्य न्यवसत्तदा

39: rāmastu punarāśaṅkya paurajānapadāgamam
praviveśa mahāraṇyaṃ śarabhaṅgāśramaṃ prati

40: satkr̥tya śarabhaṅgaṃ sa daṇḍakāraṇyamāśritaḥ
nadīṃ godāvarīṃ ramyāmāśritya nyavasattadā

Verse no. 39: Lord Ram became concerned that since now everyone has become aware of his location in the forest, it was quite possible that the inhabitants of the city and the country might return again and again. To avoid this situation, the Lord decided to move somewhere else¹. So he entered the great forest near the hermitage of sage Sharabhang².

Verse no. 40: He paid his respects to sage Sharabhang and found refuge in the forest known as Dandakaranya. He lived in the beautiful region along the banks of the river Godavari³.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 3.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 13.]

41: वसतस्तस्य रामस्य ततः शूर्पणखाकृतम्

खरेणासीन्महद्वैरं जनस्थाननिवासिना

42: रक्षार्थं तापसानां च राघवो धर्मवत्सलः

चतुर्दश सहस्राणि जघान भुवि रक्षसाम्

43: दूषणं च खरं चैव निहत्य सुमहाबलौ

चक्रे क्षेमं पुनर्धीमान्धर्मारण्यं स राघवः

41: vasatastasya rāmasya tataḥ śūrpaṇakhākṛtam

khareṇāsīnmahadvairam janasthānanivāsinā

42: rakṣārthaṁ tāpasānām ca rāghavo dharmavatsalaḥ

caturdaśa sahasrāṇi jaghāna bhuvi rakṣasām

43: dūṣaṇam ca kharam caiva nihatya sumahābalau

cakre kṣemaṁ punardhīmāndharmāraṇyaṁ sa rāghavaḥ

Verse no. 41: While he lived there, because of a female demon named Surpanakha's evil deeds¹, Lord Ram had a great enmity with the demon Khar (Supernakha's brother) who used to reside in the area of the forest where ascetics and hermits also had their hermitages.

Verse no. 42: In order to protect the ascetics and hermits (who were regularly tormented by these demons), Lord Ram (Raghava), who was always ready to protect Dharma and holy people, killed fourteen thousand rakshasas (demons) in a battle along with Khar (and Dushan, another prominent demon)².

Verse no. 43: By killing the immensely powerful Khar and Dushan, the wise Raghava brought safety to the forest and the hermits and ascetics living there.

[Note—¹Briefly the story is that Supernakha was enchanted with Lord Ram's beauty. She approached him with malefic intentions. The Lord tried his best to push her back, but when he discovered that she was determined to tarnish him, he punished her by getting her nose and ears chopped off in order to deform her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 17 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-20 that precede it.

²Supernakha went and complained to Khar and Dushan, her brothers. They attacked Lord Ram and Laxman with their army of demons. In the battle that followed, all the demons were killed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21.]

44: हतेषु तेषु रक्षःसु ततः शूर्पणखा पुनः
 ययौ निकृत्तनासोष्ठी लङ्कां भ्रातुर्निवेशनम्
 45: ततो रावणमभ्येत्य राक्षसी दुःखमूर्छिता
 पपात पादयोर्भ्रातुः संशुष्करुधिरानना
 46: तां तथा विकृतां दृष्ट्वा रावणः क्रोधमूर्छितः
 उत्पपातासनात्क्रुद्धो दन्तैर्दन्तानुपस्पृशन्
 47: स्वानमात्यान्विसृज्याथ विविक्ते तामुवाच सः
 केनास्येवं कृता भद्रे मामचिन्त्यावमन्य च
 48: कः शूलं तीक्ष्णमासाद्य सर्वगात्रैर्निषेवते
 कः शिरस्यग्निमादाय विश्वस्तः स्वपते सुखम्
 49: आशीविषं घोरतरं पादेन स्पृशतीह कः
 सिंहं केसरिणं कश्च दंष्ट्रासु स्पृश्य तिष्ठति

44: hateṣu teṣu rakṣaḥsu tataḥ sūrpaṇakhā punaḥ
 yayau nikṛttanāsoṣṭhī laṅkāṃ bhrāturniveśanam

45: tato rāvaṇamabhyetya rākṣasī duḥkhamūrchitā
 papāta pādāyorbhrātuḥ saṁśuṣkarudhirānanā

46: tāṃ tathā vikṛtāṃ dr̥ṣṭvā rāvaṇaḥ krodhamūrchitaḥ
 utpapātāsanātkruddho dantairdantānupaspr̥śan

47: svānamātyānvīsṛjyātha vivikte tāmuvāca saḥ
 kenāsyevaṃ kṛtā bhadre māmacinītyāvamanya ca

48: kaḥ śūlaṃ tīkṣṇamāsādyā sarvagātrairniṣevate
 kaḥ śīrasyagnimādāya viśvastaḥ svapate sukham

49: āśīviṣaṃ ghorataraṃ pādena spr̥śatīha kaḥ
 siṃhaṃ kesariṇaṃ kaśca daṁṣṭrāsu spr̥śya tiṣṭhati

Verse no. 44: With those demons killed in the battle, Surpanakha, with her nose and ears sliced off, went to her brother's abode in Lanka (i.e. she went to the demon king Ravana).

Verse no. 45: Virtually numbed with grief and anger, the rakshasi (the demoness; Supernaksha) went to Ravana, and with dried blood on her face she fell down at her brother's feet, weeping and lamenting gravely¹.

Verse no. 46: On seeing her so mutilated, Ravana lost his cool and became furious with anger so much so that he burst out vehemently. He gnashed his teeth in anger and jumped up from his seat.

Verse no. 47: He dismissed his advisers and privately asked her, “Oh dear one! Who has done this to you, without thinking of me and disrespecting me?”

Verse no. 48: Who has a sharp spear by his side and sleeps securely and happily with a fire lit over his head, thinking that no harm can come to him²?

Verse no. 49: Who has kicked a terrible and virulent serpent, and touched its fangs so fearlessly? Who has had the guts to touch the teeth of a lion that has thick manes (i.e. an adult and strong lion)? Tell me, who has dared to do this to you when I am present here?³”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 21 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-11 that precede it.

²In ancient times, it was a standard practice of hermits, ascetics and other forest dwellers to light a fire near the place where they slept to ward off wild animals and keep the place illuminated. They also kept a weapon, such as a spear or trident, ready at hand to protect them in case of an emergency. This way the person felt comparatively safer while he slept in the wilds. This practice is what Ravana is referring to here.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 22.]

50: इत्येवं ब्रुवतस्तस्य स्रोतोभ्यस्तेजसोऽर्चिषः

निश्चेरुर्दह्यतो रात्रौ वृक्षस्येव स्वरन्धतः

51: तस्य तत्सर्वमाचख्यौ भगिनी रामविक्रमम्

खरदूषणसंयुक्तं राक्षसानां पराभवम्

50: ityevaṃ bruvatastasya srotobhyastejaso'rciṣaḥ
niścērudahyato rātrau vṛkṣasyeva svarandhrataḥ

51: tasya tatsarvamācakhyau bhaginī rāmaṇvīkramam
kharadūṣaṇasaṃyuktaṃ rākṣasānāṃ parābhavam

Verse no. 50: While Ravana was speaking these words, sparks of flame representing his fury and ferocious vehemence issued forth from the pores in his body, like sparks bursting from the hollows of a flaming tree at night. {To wit, Ravana was literally burning with anger and vengeance.

Verse no. 51: Then his sister (Supernakha) told him everything about Lord Ram's valour and prowess, and the defeat of Khar and Dushan, accompanied by the other rakshasas (demons), at his hand. {Obviously, this added fuel to Ravana's anger because it hurt his ego directly. It meant that Lord Ram was fearless of him, that he had the power, ability and guts to eliminate a large army of demon warriors who were supposed to be under the protection of their king Ravana. This was an insinuation, an insult and a direct challenge to Ravana's authority that was too much for him to bear

with. He shook and shuddered in anger, losing his wisdom and self-control, and determined to seek revenge.}

52: स निश्चित्य ततः कृत्यं स्वसारमुपसान्त्व्य च

ऊर्ध्वमाचक्रमे राजा विधाय नगरे विधिम्

53: त्रिकूटं समतिक्रम्य कालपर्वतमेव च

ददर्श मकरावासं गम्भीरोदं महोदधिम्

54: तमतीत्याथ गोकर्णमभ्यगच्छद्दशाननः

दयितं स्थानमव्यग्रं शूलपाणेर्महात्मनः

55: तत्राभ्यगच्छन्मारीचं पूर्वामात्यं दशाननः

पुरा रामभयादेव तापस्यं समुपाश्रितम्

52: sa niścitya tataḥ kṛtyaṃ svasāramupasāntvya ca
ūrdhvamācakrame rājā vidhāya nagare vidhim

53: trikūṭaṃ samatikramya kālaparvatameva ca
dadarśa makarāvāsaṃ gambhīrodaṃ mahodadhim

54: tamatītyātha gokarṇamabhyagacchaddaśānanaḥ
dayitaṃ sthānamavyagraṃ śūlapāṇermahātmanaḥ

55: tatrābhyagacchanmārīcaṃ pūrvāmātyaṃ daśānanaḥ
purā rāmaḥbhayādeva tāpasyaṃ samupāśritaṃ

Verse no. 52: Having decided on what was to be done, he consoled and comforted his sister, and after having made due arrangements for the protection of the city (of Lanka), Ravana, the king of demons, rose up into the sky to implement the plan he had decided.

Verse no. 53: He crossed the mountains known as Trikuta and Kala, and saw the great and deep ocean which was an abode of crocodiles and alligators (makaras; “makarāvāsaṃ”).

Verse no. 54: Dashanan (i.e. the ten-headed Ravana) passed over it and went to Gokarna, the tranquil and revered region which was an abode of the great god who was a ‘wielder of the trident’ (śūlapāṇermahātmanaḥ; i.e. Lord Shiva).

Verse no. 55: Dashanan went to straight to Maricha, his former adviser. Because of his fear of Ram, Marich had become an ascetic¹ and lived a secluded life of a hermit in a hermitage (in the area around the abode of Lord Shiva as he felt it was safe for him; he wanted to spend the rest of his life in meditation and repentance to give peace to his soul).’’

[Note—¹The story of Marich in brief is this: He and his companion named Subahu used to torment sages and destroy their fire sacrifices. One great sage named

Vishwamitra was fed-up by their activities. He approached king Dashrath and requested him to send Lord Ram and Laxman to protect his fire sacrifice that was routinely defiled by Marich and Subahu. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedess Doha no. 206—to Sortha no. 208.}

The two brothers accompanied the sage to his hermitage. In the morning, Lord Ram asked the sage to resume his rituals and he would stand guard. Just at that time, Marich and Subahu attacked. Lord Ram slayed Subahu with a fiery arrow (like a missile), while Marich was shot by an arrow that did not kill him but flung him thousands of miles away. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.}

Since that time, Marich lived alone like an ascetic. Ravana approached him in his hermitage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

Thus ends Canto 261.

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Canto 262:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: मारीचस्त्वथ संभ्रान्तो दृष्ट्वा रावणमागतम्

पूजयामास सत्कारैः फलमूलादिभिस्तथा

2: विश्रान्तं चैनमासीनमन्वासीनः स राक्षसः

उवाच प्रश्रितं वाक्यं वाक्यज्ञो वाक्यकोविदम्

3: न ते प्रकृतिमान्वर्णः कच्चित्क्षेमं पुरे तव

कच्चित्प्रकृतयः सर्वा भजन्ते त्वां यथा पुरा

4: किमिहागमने चापि कार्यं ते राक्षसेश्वर

कृतमित्येव तद्विद्धि यद्यपि स्यात्सुदुष्करम्

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: mārīcastvatha saṁbhrānto dr̥ṣṭvā rāvaṇamāgatam
pūjayāmāsa satkāraiḥ phalamūlādibhistathā

2: viśrāntaṁ cainamāsīnamanvāsīnaḥ sa rākṣasaḥ
uvāca praśritaṁ vākyaṁ vākyaajño vākyaavidam

3: na te prakṛtimānvarṇaḥ kaccitkṣemaṁ pure tava
kaccitprakṛtayaḥ sarvā bhajante tvāṁ yathā purā

4: kimihāgamane cāpi kāryaṁ te rākṣaseśvara
kṛtamityeva tadviddhi yadyapi syātsuduṣkaram

{The following verses describe the encounter between Ravana and Marich, leading to the latter's role in Ravana's plot to abduct Sita.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: “On seeing Ravana arrive in great haste and full of agitation, Maricha acted wisely by respectfully welcoming him. He courteously gave Ravana refreshments such as fruits, roots and other objects to eat and relax (as anyone would to his guest)¹.

{Ravana was a king of the demon race to which Marich belonged, as well as his former lord and employer. When Marich saw Ravana in an agitated state, he become alarmed, but being wise and prudent, he maintained his calm and did his best to bring down the temperature by showing respect to Ravana and extending hospitality to him in the form of refreshments and giving him a comfortable seat. This at least ensured that Ravana would not find an excuse to vent his ire on his former advisor. Had Marich not been courteous to Ravana, it is quite possible that the latter would have become furious and killed Marich instantly for being rude and insulting to him.}

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 24.]

Verse no. 2: When the demon king (Ravana) had rested for a while and comfortably seated, Marich, who was skilled in using polite words, spoke to his guest who himself was well-versed in using polite words (when he needed the other person's help to fulfil his desires and interests).

Verse no. 3: Marich said to Ravana: “Oh Lord, your complexion is not in its natural state. Is everything well in your city? Do all your subjects honour you, as they used to do earlier?

Verse no. 4: Oh lord of the rakshasas (demons)! What task has brought you here²? Even if the task is difficult to accomplish, consider it as already been (i.e. be assured that your wishes would be fulfilled and your commands would be obeyed by me).”

[Note—²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 24.]

5: शशंस रावणस्तस्मै तत्सर्वं रामचेष्टितम्
मारीचस्त्वब्रवीच्छ्रुत्वा समासेनैव रावणम्
6: अलं ते राममासाद्य वीर्यज्ञो ह्यस्मि तस्य वै
बाणवेगं हि कस्तस्य शक्तः सोढुं महात्मनः
7: प्रव्रज्यायां हि मे हेतुः स एव पुरुषर्षभः
विनाशमुखमेतत्ते केनाख्यातं दुरात्मना

5: śaśaṃsa rāvaṇastasmai tatsarvaṃ rāmaceṣṭitam
māricastvabravīcchrutvā samāsenaiḥ rāvaṇam

6: alaṃ te rāmamāsādyā vīryajñō hyasmi tasya vai
bāṇavegaṃ hi kastasya śaktaḥ soḍhum mahātmanaḥ

7: pravrajyāyāṃ hi me hetuḥ sa eva puruṣarṣabhaḥ
vināśamukhametatte kenākhyātaṃ durātmanā

Verse no. 5: Ravana told him everything about what Lord Ram had done¹. After listening, Maricha briefly told him as follows—

Verse no. 6: “My Lord, I beg you not to provoke Lord Ram; it would be extremely unwise to do so. I am acquainted with his valour, abilities and prowess. Is there anyone who can withstand the force of the arrows of that valiant warrior whose one shot had flunged me hundreds of miles away to this lonely place²?

Verse no. 7: Lord Ram, who is like a bull amongst men, is responsible for my leading the life of an ascetic in this remote area. Who has given you this evil and wicked advice to confront Lord Ram? The course of action that you propose to follow is sure to lead to you to the mouth of destruction.³”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

8: तमुवाचाथ सक्रोधो रावणः परिभर्त्सयन्
अकुर्वतोऽस्मद्वचनं स्यान्मृत्युरपि ते ध्रुवम्
9: मारीचश्चिन्तयामास विशिष्टान्मरणं वरम्
अवश्यं मरणे प्राप्ते करिष्याम्यस्य यन्मतम्

8: tamuvācātha sakrodho rāvaṇaḥ paribhartsayan
akurvato'smadvacanaṃ syānmṛtyurapi te dhruvam

9: mārīcaścintayāmāsa viśiṣṭānmaraṇaṃ varam
avaśyaṃ maraṇe prāpte kariṣyāmyasya yanmatam

Verse no. 8: On hearing this, Ravana became furious as he angrily berated Marich. He told Marich in a scathing language: “If you do not act in accordance with my words, it is certain that you will meet your death right now.”

Verse no. 9: Maricha then thought to himself, ‘It is better to die at the hands of Lord Ram who is undoubtedly a superior being and one who is righteous and a follower of Dharma. Since death is now certain for me, why not die at the hands of Lord Ram,

instead of getting killed by this wicked and evil fellow? A noble death is certainly better than a disgraceful living. Therefore, I will do what he wants me to do¹.”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 26.]

10: ततस्तं प्रत्युवाचाथ मारीचो राक्षसेश्वरम्
किं ते साहयं मया कार्यं करिष्याम्यवशोऽपि तत्
11: तमब्रवीद्दशग्रीवो गच्छ सीतां प्रलोभय
रत्नशृङ्गो मृगो भूत्वा रत्नचित्रतनूरुहः
12: ध्रुवं सीता समालक्ष्य त्वां रामं चोदयिष्यति
अपक्रान्ते च काकुत्स्थे सीता वश्या भविष्यति
13: तामादायापनेष्यामि ततः स न भविष्यति
भार्यावियोगाद्बुद्धिरेतत्साहयं कुरुष्व मे

10: tatastaṁ pratyuvācātha mārīco rākṣaseśvaram
kiṁ te sāhyaṁ mayā kāryaṁ kariṣyāmyavaśo'pi tat

11: tamabravīddaśagrīvo gaccha sītāṁ pralobhaya
ratnaśṛṅgo mṛgo bhūtvā ratnacitratanūruhaḥ

12: dhruvaṁ sītā samālakṣya tvāṁ rāmaṁ codayiṣyati
apakrānte ca kākutsthe sītā vaśyā bhaviṣyati

13: tāmādāyāpaneṣyāmi tataḥ sa na bhaviṣyati
bhāryāvīyogādbuddhīretatsāhyaṁ kuruṣva me

Verse no. 10: Maricha then replied to the lord of the demons (Ravana): “Say, what help can I render to you? I will do it even if I am not capable of it.”

Verse no. 11: Then Dashagriva (i.e. Ravana who had ten heads perched on ten necks) told him: “Go and tempt Sita. Become a deer with jewels on its antlers, and with a skin that is adorned with gems and shines like gold (i.e. become a ‘golden deer’ of a rare kind, something that is exquisite and exceptionally charming, something worth acquiring and keeping as a pet at all costs)¹.

Verse no. 12: It is certain that on seeing you, Sita will send Ram after you to fetch you². With Kakutstha (Lord Ram) gone pursuing you, Sita will be alone and within my grasp.

Verse no. 13: I will then abduct her³. After this humiliating loss of his wife, Lord Ram would feel depressed, dejected and forlorn; he will lose his courage and the boldness that he exhibits at present. He will no longer be a threat to me. I want you to render this service to me.”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 27.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 26.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25.]

14: इत्येवमुक्तो मारीचः कृत्वोदकमथात्मनः
 रावणं पुरतो यान्तमन्वगच्छत्सुदुःखितः
 15: ततस्तस्याश्रमं गत्वा रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः
 चक्रतुस्तत्तथा सर्वमुभौ यत्पूर्वमन्त्रितम्

14: ityevamukto mārīcaḥ kṛtvodakamathātmanaḥ
 rāvaṇaṁ purato yāntamanvagacchatsuduḥkhitaḥ

15: tatastasyāśramaṁ gatvā rāmasyākliṣṭakarmanaḥ
 cakratustattathā sarvamubhau yatpūrvamantritam

Verse no. 14: Having been thus instructed by Ravana, Maricha prepared himself for death by performing his own last rites with water for deliverance of his soul. Extremely miserable, he followed Ravana who led the way.

Verse no. 15: The two went to the hermitage of Lord Ram, the noble Lord whose deeds were unsullied. They acted exactly as they had planned earlier.

16: रावणस्तु यतिर्भूत्वा मुण्डः कुण्डी त्रिदण्डधृक्
 मृगश्च भूत्वा मारीचस्तं देशमुपजग्मतुः
 17: दर्शयामास वैदेहीं मारीचो मृगरूपधृक्
 चोदयामास तस्यार्थे सा रामं विधिचोदिता
 18: रामस्तस्याः प्रियं कुर्वन्धनुरादाय सत्वरः
 रक्षार्थं लक्ष्मणं न्यस्य प्रययौ मृगलिप्सया

16: rāvaṇastu yatirbhūtvā muṇḍaḥ kuṇḍī tridaṇḍadhṛk
 mṛgaśca bhūtvā mārīcastaṁ deśamupajagmatuḥ

17: darśayāmāsa vaidehīm mārīco mṛgarūpadhṛk
 codayāmāsa tasyārthe sā rāmaṁ vidhicoditā

18: rāmastasyāḥ priyaṁ kurvandhanurādāya satvaraḥ
 rakṣārthe lakṣmaṇaṁ nyasya prayayau mṛgalipsayā

Verse no. 16: Ravana assumed the form of an ascetic, with his head shaven and holding a hermit's water pot and a staff in his hand¹. Maricha simultaneously assumed the form of a magnificent deer², and they went to that spot where Lord Ram had his hermitage.

Verse no. 17: Maricha showed himself to Vaidehi (Sita) in the form of a golden deer with its hide and antelers studded with gems. Prompted by destiny, she was enchanted by the deer's exquisite beauty, and so she sent Lord Ram after him to fetch this rare species of deer for her³.

Verse no. 18: With a view to please her, Lord Ram swiftly grasped his bow. He entrusted Laxman with the task of protecting her, and himself went after the deer to catch it⁴.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 28.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 27.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 27.]

19: स धन्वी बद्धतूणीरः खड्गगोधाङ्गुलित्रवान्
अन्वधावन्मृगं रामो रुद्रस्तारामृगं यथा
20: सोऽन्तर्हितः पुनस्तस्य दर्शनं राक्षसो व्रजन्
चकर्ष महदध्वानं रामस्तं बुबुधे ततः
21: निशाचरं विदित्वा तं राघवः प्रतिभानवान्
अमोघं शरमादाय जघान मृगरूपिणम्

19: sa dhanvī baddhatūṇīraḥ khaḍgagodhāṅgulitravān
anvadhāvanmṛgaṃ rāmo rudrastārāmṛgaṃ yathā

20: so'ntarhitāḥ punastasya darśanaṃ rākṣaso vrajan
cakarṣa mahadadhvānaṃ rāmastaṃ bubudhe tataḥ

21: nīśācaraṃ viditvā taṃ rāghavaḥ pratibhānavān
amoghaṃ śaramādāya jaghāna mṛgarūpiṇam

Verse no. 19: Lord Ram held his bow and tied his quiver. He had his sword and guards for his arms and fingers. Thus armed, Lord Ram followed the deer, like Lord Rudra (one of the forms of Lord Shiva) following a celestial stag.

Verse no. 20: The rakshasa (i.e. the demon Marich) appeared and disappeared repeatedly before the Lord in order to create deception and confuse him with an intention to take him far away¹. Although the Lord knew everything and who that deer actually was², but he played along (in order to fulfil the larger mandate of finding an excuse to eliminate the cruel demons led by Ravana of Lanka, the reason why Lord Vishnu had come down to this mortal world in the physical form of Lord Ram).

Verse no. 21: Knowing him (Marich) to be a nocturnal creature of the night, someone who roams around under the cover of darkness of the night, a stalker of the night (niśācaram), the wise Lord Ram (Raghava) grasped an unfailing arrow and killed that demon (Marich) who was disguised as a deer³.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-13 that precede Doha no. 26.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

22: स रामबाणाभिहतः कृत्वा रामस्वरं तदा
 हा सीते लक्ष्मणेत्येवं चुक्रोशार्तस्वरेण ह
 23: शुश्राव तस्य वैदेही ततस्तां करुणां गिरम्
 सा प्राद्रवद्यतः शब्दस्तामुवाचाथ लक्ष्मणः
 24: अलं ते शङ्कया भीरु को रामं विषहिष्यति
 मुहूर्ताद्द्रक्ष्यसे राममागतं तं शुचिस्मिते
 25: इत्युक्त्वा सा प्ररुदती पर्यशङ्कत देवरम्
 हता वै स्त्रीस्वभावेन शुद्धचारित्रभूषणम्
 26: सा तं परुषमारब्धा वक्तुं साध्वी पतिव्रता
 नैष कालो भवेन्मूढ यं त्वं प्रार्थयसे हृदा
 27: अप्यहं शस्त्रमादाय हन्यामात्मानमात्मना
 पतेयं गिरिशृङ्गाद्वा विशेषं वा हुताशनम्
 28: रामं भर्तारमुत्सृज्य न त्वहं त्वां कथंचन
 निहीनमुपतिष्ठेयं शार्दूली क्रोष्टुकं यथा

22: sa rāmaḥbāṇābhihataḥ kṛtvā rāmasvaram tadā
 hā site lakṣmaṇetyevaṃ cukrośārtasvareṇa ha

23: śuśrāva tasya vaidehī tatastām karuṇām giram
 sā prādravadyataḥ śabdastāmuḥvācātha lakṣmaṇaḥ

24: alaṃ te śaṅkayā bhīru ko rāmaṃ viśahiṣyati
muhūrtāddrakṣyase rāmamāgataṃ taṃ śucismite

25: ityuktvā sā prarudatī paryaśaṅkata devaram
hatā vai strīsvabhāvena śuddhacāritrabhūṣaṇam

26: sā taṃ paruṣamārabdhā vaktuṃ sādhvī pativratā
naiṣa kālo bhavenmūḍha yaṃ tvam prārthayase hr̥dā

27: apyahaṃ śastramādāya hanyāmātmānamātmanā
pateyaṃ giriśṛṅgādvā viśeyaṃ vā hutāśanam

28: rāmaṃ bhartāramutsrjya na tvahaṃ tvām kathaṃcana
nihīnamupatiṣṭheyaṃ śārdūlī kroṣṭukaṃ yathā

Verse no. 22: Struck by Lord Ram's arrow, Marich imitated the Lord's voice and called out in a piteous voice, "Alas, oh Sita! Alas, oh Laxman!"¹

{Marich's urgent call appeared to give an impression that Lord Ram was somehow trapped and was in a dire strait, seeking help from Laxman and grieving for his beloved wife Sita during his last moments of life. Obviously this was a deception created by Marich to clear the way for Ravana to abduct Sita as it was natural that after hearing this urgent call for help, Laxman would dash to protect Lord Ram, thereby leaving Sita alone in the hermitage.}

Verse no. 23: When Vaidehi (Sita) heard those piteous words, she was very agitated and was about to run in the direction from which the sound of these words came. But Laxman intervened and restrained her. He told Sita—

Verse no. 24: "Please don't act in haste and be unnecessarily upset. Don't act timidly and become anxious too easily. Who can strike Lord Ram and fell him? Oh noble lady with a sweet smile (taṃ śucismite)! You will see Lord Ram return in a short while; have a bit of patience."²

Verse no. 25: She was weeping inconsolably. At these words of Laxman, Sita, as is the natural reaction of a woman in distress, suspected her younger brother-in-law's integrity and doubted his intention, though Laxman had an immaculate character and purity heart which had always been an adornment for him.

{Sita suspected that secretly Laxman eyes her and wants her husband out of the way. That is the reason, she thought, why he is stopping her from going in the direction from which the distress call in Lord Ram's voice came, so that if the Lord dies, then Laxman can prevail upon her to accept him in the place of her husband, especially when they were now alone and she faced the harsh reality of a wild forest where she definitely needed protection. With her husband Lord Ram no more, she would be left with no choice but to accept Laxman's proposal as a practical means of survival.}

Verse no. 26: Thus, the chaste and faithful wife of Lord Ram, i.e. Sita, then uttered some very harsh words for Laxman³. "Oh you stupid and corrupt fellow," she

bellowed at Laxman. “This is not the time for satisfying the malicious desire in your heart.

Verse nos. 27-28: I would rather take a sword and kill myself, or throw myself from the peak of a mountain, or enter the fire to burn myself, rather than abandon my husband Lord Ram and serve a mean person like you. Remember, I am like a tigress waiting to pounce upon a jackal if the latter dares to act stupidly against me.”

{Here, Sita likens Laxman to a jackal and herself to a tigress. She says that it is nonsense if a jackal thinks to mate with a tigress; the very thought is reprehensible and ludicrous; it is abhorable and contemptible. How dare could Laxman wish to have Sita as his partner? Obviously, this was too much for Laxman to bear with. He was remorseful and appalled, and filled with utmost distress, dismay and disgust at these insinuating words of Sita. Later on when Lord Ram was returning after killing the deceptive deer and saw Laxman coming, he was surprised and admonished Laxman for leaving Sita alone in a demon-infested forest against his orders. At that time Laxman told the Lord that he is not at fault, but the situation had turned so nasty and unpleasant that he had no option but to leave the hermitage and come to the Lord. This development is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30.}

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 26. Here, Marich has called out Laxman’s name only, and not of Sita.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 28.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

29: एतादृशं वचः श्रुत्वा लक्ष्मणः प्रियराघवः
पिधाय कर्णौ सद्वृत्तः प्रस्थितो येन राघवः
स रामस्य पदं गृह्य प्रससार धनुर्धरः

29: etādr̥śaṃ vacaḥ śrutvā lakṣmaṇaḥ priyarāghavaḥ
pidhāya karṇau sadvṛttaḥ prasthito yena rāghavaḥ
sa rāmasya padaṃ gr̥hya prasasāra dhanurdharaḥ

Verse no. 29: Laxman who loved Lord Ram and the Lord too reciprocated Laxman’s affection for him (lakṣmaṇaḥ priyarāghavaḥ) was always virtuous. On hearing these cruel words of Sita that cast aspersions on his otherwise well-known immaculate character, Laxman was aghast. He covered up his ears with his hands as a gesture that he loathes hearing such insinuating words for himself, he left in the direction from where Lord Ram’s voice appeared to come. While departing, he grasped his bow and followed the path that his brother, Lord Ram, had taken a little while ago.

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

30: एतस्मिन्नन्तरे रक्षो रावणः प्रत्यदृश्यत
 अभव्यो भव्यरूपेण भस्मच्छन्न इवानलः
 यतिवेषप्रतिच्छन्नो जिहीर्षुस्तामनिन्दिताम्
 31: सा तमालक्ष्य संप्राप्तं धर्मज्ञा जनकात्मजा
 निमन्त्रयामास तदा फलमूलाशनादिभिः
 32: अवमन्य स तत्सर्वं स्वरूपं प्रतिपद्य च
 सान्त्वयामास वैदेहीमिति राक्षसपुंगवः
 33: सीते राक्षसराजोऽहं रावणो नाम विश्रुतः
 मम लङ्का पुरी नाम्ना रम्या पारे महोदधेः
 34: तत्र त्वं वरनारीषु शोभिष्यसि मया सह
 भार्या मे भव सुश्रोणि तापसं त्यज राघवम्

30: etasminnantare rakṣo rāvaṇaḥ pratyadrśyata
 abhavyo bhavyarūpeṇa bhasmacchanna ivānalaḥ
 yativeṣapratichchanno jihīrṣustāmaninditām

31: sā tamālakṣya saṁprāptaṁ dharmajñā janakātmajā
 nimantrayāmāsa tadā phalamūlāśanādibhiḥ

32: avamanya sa tatsarvaṁ svarūpaṁ pratipadya ca
 sāntvayāmāsa vaidehīmiti rākṣasapuṁgavaḥ

33: site rākṣasarājo'haṁ rāvaṇo nāma viśrutaḥ
 mama laṅkā purī nāmnā ramyā pāre mahodadheḥ

34: tatra tvaṁ varanārīṣu śobhiṣyasi mayā saha
 bhāryā me bhava suśroṇi tāpasam tyaja rāghavam

Verse no. 30: Meanwhile, the rakshasa Ravana made his appearance before Sita. Though he was wicked, he assumed a gentle form, like a fire hidden under ashes. He disguised himself as an ascetic¹, because he desired to abduct Sita who had an unblemished character.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

Verse no. 31: On seeing Ravana arrive, Janaka's virtuous daughter Sita invited him. Since he was disguised as an ascetic (who is supposed to be pious and holy, someone everyone would trust), she offered hospitality to him by offering him refreshments in

the form of fruits, edible roots, a seat and other things that anyone would offer an honourable guest.

Verse no. 32: But Ravana, who was like a bull amongst the demons, ignored all this. He assumed his original form² and tried to impress and appease Sita by flattering her and offering her what seemed to be an attractive option.

[Note—²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

Verse no. 33: Ravana said: “Oh Sita! I am the famous king of the demon race (rākṣasarājo'ham), and my name is Ravana. My beautiful city of Lanka is located on the other side of the great ocean.

Verse no. 34: Among the beautiful women who are there, you will occupy a privileged place and look magnificent by my side if you become my consort; you will look glorious (seated by my side) as a queen of a great emperor of the demon race (varanārīṣu śobhiṣyasi mayā saha). Oh one with a fair complexion and beautiful hips (suśroṇi)! Become my wife and abandon the ascetic Raghava. {Ram, living like an ascetic and with no certainty of his ever getting his throne of Ayodhya, cannot give you the comforts and pleasures of a royal life that you truly deserve. If you become my wife, every conceivable joy and comfort and pleasures will be yours for the asking. So therefore, it is wise for you to accept my proposal.}³”

[Note—³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

35: एवमादीनि वाक्यानि श्रुत्वा सीताथ जानकी

पिधाय कर्णौ सुश्रोणी मैवमित्यब्रवीद्वचः

36: प्रपतेद्दयौः सनक्षत्रा पृथिवी शकलीभवेत्

शैत्यमग्निरियान्नाहं त्यजेयं रघुनन्दनम्

37: कथं हि भिन्नकरटं पद्मिनं वनगोचरम्

उपस्थाय महानागं करेणुः सूकरं स्पृशेत्

38: कथं हि पीत्वा माध्वीकं पीत्वा च मधुमाधवीम्

लोभं सौवीरके कुर्यान्नारी काचिदिति स्मरे

35: evamādīni vākyaṇi śrutvā sītātha jānakī
pidhāya karṇau suśroṇī maivamityabravīdvacaḥ

36: prapateddyauḥ sanakṣatrā pṛthivī śakalībhavet
śaityamagniriyānnāhaṁ tyajeyaṁ raghunandanam

37: kathaṁ hi bhinnakaraṭaṁ padmināṁ vanagocaram
upasthāya mahānāgaṁ kareṇuḥ sūkaraṁ sprśet

38: katham̐ hi pītvā mādhvīkaṃ pītvā ca madhumādhavīm
lobhaṃ sauṁvīrake kuryānnārī kāciditi smare

Verse no. 35: When Janaki Sita heard abhorable words like these, the one with the beautiful hips (suśroṇī) covered up her ears in disgust and said, “Do not speak such horrible words for me¹.”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

Verse no. 36: The sky may fall with its stars. The earth may be shattered. The fire may become cold. But I will not desert my beloved husband Lord Ram who is a descendant of the great and honourable lineage of the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya.

Verse no. 37: Can a she-elephant, after serving and getting protection of a giant male elephant who is healthy, bold and brave, one who fearlessly roams around the forest ranges together with her, ever imagine of touching a lowly hog?

{Here, Sita compares Ravana to a lowly hog, and her husband Lord Ram to a bold, brave and healthy elephant. Obviously, this infuriated Ravana no end.}

Verse no. 38: Just as a lady who has tasted the sweetness of honey and nectar would never desire to taste sour wine, so too my devotion for Lord Ram is unshakable and cannot be compromised. I cannot even think of anything other than that.”

39: इति सा तं समाभाष्य प्रविवेशाश्रमं पुनः

तामनुद्रुत्य सुश्रोणीं रावणः प्रत्यषेधयत्

40: भर्त्सयित्वा तु रूक्षेण स्वरेण गतचेतनाम्

मूर्धजेषु निजग्राह खमुपाचक्रमे ततः

41: तां ददर्श तदा गृध्रो जटायुर्गिरिगोचरः

रुदतीं राम रामेति ह्रियमाणां तपस्विनीम्

39: iti sā taṃ samābhāṣya praviveśāśramam punaḥ
tāmanudrutya suśroṇīm rāvaṇaḥ pratyāṣedhayat

40: bhartsayitvā tu rūkṣeṇa svareṇa gatacetanām
mūrdhajeṣu nijagrāha khamupācakrame tataḥ

41: tāṃ dadarśa tadā gṛdhro jaṭāyurgirigocaraḥ
rudatīm rāma rāmeti hriyamāṇām tapasvinīm

Verse no. 39: Having spoken these words of rebuke to Ravana, Sita entered the hermitage again. Ravana followed her who had beautiful hips (suśroṇīm), and tried to restrain her in a threatening voice.

Verse no. 40: Shocked beyond measure (when she saw Ravana pursuing her inside the hermitage), Sita lost her senses and fainted. But Ravana grasped her by long hairs, and lifting her unconscious form, he thrust her into his chariot and rose up in the sky¹.

Verse no. 41: A vulture named Jatayu, who lived on a mountain, saw the distressed, weeping and lamenting Sita being abducted by Ravana. She was grieving and wailing loudly, repeating the name of her beloved husband, Lord Ram, “Oh Ram, Oh Ram!”²

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 28.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 29.]

Thus ends Canto 262.

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Canto 263:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: सखा दशरथस्यासीज्जटायुररुणात्मजः

गृध्रराजो महावीर्यः संपातिर्यस्य सोदरः

2: स ददर्श तदा सीतां रावणाङ्कगतां स्नुषाम्

क्रोधादभ्यद्रवत्पक्षी रावणं राक्षसेश्वरम्

3: अथैनमब्रवीद्गृध्रो मुञ्च मुञ्चेति मैथिलीम्

ध्रियमाणे मयि कथं हरिष्यसि निशाचर

न हि मे मोक्ष्यसे जीवन्यदि नोत्सृजसे वधूम्

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: sakhā daśarathasyāsījjaṭāyurarunaṭmajah
grdhrarājo mahāvīryaḥ saṃpātiryasya sodaraḥ

2: sa dadarśa tadā sītāṃ rāvaṇāṅkagatāṃ snuṣām
krodhādabhyadravatpakṣī rāvaṇaṃ rākṣaseśvaram

3: athainamabravidgrdhro muñca muñceti maithilīm
dhriyamāṇe mayi katham hariṣyasi niśācara
na hi me mokṣyase jīvanyadi notsrjase vadhūm

{The following verses narrate the poignant and dramatic episode of Jatayu's heroic attempt to rescue Sita from Ravana, his tragic death, and Lord Ram's anguish upon discovering these sorrowful events.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: “The immensely valorous and mighty king of the vultures, whose name was ‘Jatayu’, was the son of Aruna and the brother of Sampati; he was also a friend of king Dashrath¹, Lord Ram’s father.

Verse no. 2: When the bird saw Sita, he immediately recognised her as the wife of Lord Ram, and therefore she was a daughter-in-law of his friend Dashrath. Seeing her helpless in Ravana's arms, he became furious with anger, and dashed forward towards the lord of the demons (i.e. Ravana) to protect her from the clutches of her evil abductor².

Verse no. 3: The vulture told him, “Oh you nasty nocturnal creature (niśācara)³! Let her go. Let Maithili go. How dare you think that you can carry her off as long as I am alive⁴? If you do not give up the daughter-in-law, you will not escape with your life.”

[Note—¹When Lord Ram met a seriously wounded Jatayu who died soon after disclosing to the Lord the latest developments, informing him that Ravana had abducted Sita and had flown in the southern direction towards Lanka, Lord Ram tells Jatayu not to tell anything to his father Dashrath when the two meet each other in heaven—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 31. The Lord said this because he knew that his father Dashrath and Jatayu were friends, and when two friends meet each other it is but natural that they discuss things and update each other of the developments that have taken place since their last meeting.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 29.

³A “niśācara” is technically someone who roams around in the darkness of the night. He would prowl in the night, lurking in the darkness of the night, stalking and preying upon unsuspecting victims, grabbing them and devouring them. A “niśācara” is afraid of daylight, and is a dweller of the darkness in the night. He keeps awake during the night and hides during the day. A “niśācara” usually eats raw human flesh, and differs from carnivorous animals such as tigers, lions, wolves etc. in that they walk erect on two feet like human beings. They even have a full language of their own like human beings do, unlike other raw flesh-eating animals. In European context, the human flesh eating “niśācara” can be likened to the legend of the Dracula, or vampires, witches, werewolves and other fearful creatures who howl and prowl in the night.

In the context of the Ramayana, this word is used to mean a ‘demon’. These “niśācara” or demons did not attack their victims solely in the night, but were active during the daytime too. For instance, Ravana came to abduct Sita in the day; Marich and Subahu attacked sage Vishwamitra’s fire sacrifice also during the morning hours; the war of Lanka was fought during the day; Hanuman crossed the ocean to meet Sita, confront the demons and killed a large number of them before burning Lanka—all done in daylight.

Hence, a “niśācara” is a demonic creature who is evil, wild and sinful; one who does not follow Dharma; one who torments innocent people and obstruct all kinds of good activities; they would defile religious ceremonies and kill hermits, ascetics and other pious souls.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-11, 15-16 that precede Doha no. 29.]

4: उक्तवैवं राक्षसेन्द्रं तं चकर्त नखरैर्भृशम्
 पक्षतुण्डप्रहारैश्च बहुशो जर्जरीकृतः
 चक्षार रुधिरं भूरि गिरिः प्रस्रवणैरिव
 5: स वध्यमानो गृध्रेण रामप्रियहितैषिणा
 खड्गमादाय चिच्छेद भुजौ तस्य पतत्रिणः
 6: निहत्य गृध्रराजं स छिन्नाभशिखरोपमम्
 ऊर्ध्वमाचक्रमे सीतां गृहीत्वाङ्केन राक्षसः

4: uktvaivaṃ rākṣasendram taṃ cakarta nakharairbhṛśam
 pakṣatuṇḍaprahāraiśca bahuśo jarjarīkṛtaḥ
 cakṣāra rudhiram bhūri giriḥ prasravaṇairiva

5: sa vadhyamāno gr̥dhreṇa rāmapriyahitaiṣiṇā
 khaḍgamādāya ciccheda bhujau tasya patatṛiṇaḥ

6: nihatya gr̥dhrarājāṃ sa chinnābhraśīkharopamam
 ūrdhvamācakrame sītāṃ gr̥hītvāṅkena rākṣasaḥ

Verse no. 4: Saying this, Jatayu vehemently and powerfully attacked Ravana, who was the king of the demon race just like Indra is the undisputed king of the gods. Jatayu attacked Ravana with his talons (sharp claws). He struck Ravana ferociously and repeatedly with his wings and beak, thereby lacerating the latter in many ways¹ so much so that large quantities of blood began to gush out of the demon's body like mountain springs.

Verse no. 5: Thus struck by the vulture, who wished to do everything necessary for the welfare of Lord Ram (which at present was to free his wife Sita from the clutches of her abductor), Ravana grasped his sword and sliced off the wings of the bird².

Verse no. 6: Having seriously wounded and laying off Jatayu, the king of the vultures, and looking like a mountain seen through scattered clouds, the rakshasa (Ravana) grasped Sita and resumed his journey in his chariot through the sky³ (towards his city of Lanka).

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 17-19 that precede Doha no. 29.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 20-21 that precede Doha no. 29.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 22 that precedes Doha no. 29. After felling Jatayu, Ravana got up hastily. His body swelled as he breathed

heavily. Since he had a broad chest and a colossal body with ten heads jutting out from his enormous body frame, it is said that he appeared like a huge mountain that is seen once the clouds covering it are dispersed.]

7: यत्र यत्र तु वैदेही पश्यत्याश्रममण्डलम्
 सरो वा सरितं वापि तत्र मुञ्चति भूषणम्
 8: सा ददर्श गिरिप्रस्थे पञ्च वानरपुंगवान्
 तत्र वासो महद्दिव्यमुत्ससर्ज मनस्विनी
 9: तत्तेषां वानरेन्द्राणां पपात पवनोद्धृतम्
 मध्ये सुपीतं पञ्चानां विद्युन्मेघान्तरे यथा

7: yatra yatra tu vaidehī paśyatyāśramamaṇḍalam
 saro vā saritaṁ vāpi tatra muñcati bhūṣaṇam

8: sā dadarśa giriprasthe pañca vānarapuṁgavān
 tatra vāso mahaddivyaṁ utsasarja manasvinī

9: tatteṣāṁ vānarendrāṇāṁ papāta pavanoddhutam
 madhye supītaṁ pañcānāṁ vidyunmeghāntare yathā

Verse no. 7: Whenever Vaidehi (Sita) saw a group of hermitages, a pond, a river or a well, she loosened one of her ornaments and flung it down (to act as signs or marking points of the direction in which she was being taken away through the path of the sky).

{She did it so that if Lord Ram and Laxman happened to pass that way, these pieces of her personal ornaments would act as signs to roughly outline the direction in which she was being taken away by her abductor. Once Lord Ram and Laxman find one or two such ornaments, they would immediately get a hint of the direction in which Sita was being taken, because it would be almost a straight line if two or three such points were joined together. The reason is that Ravana was flying through the sky, instead of going by land, and he would naturally take the shortest route to Lanka, which is possible only if he flies in a straight line like a bird flies in the sky from one point to the other.}

Verse no. 8: On the slopes of a mountain, she saw five mighty monkeys. She saw an opportunity and flung down an expensive piece of her garment there.

Verse no. 9: Driven by the wind, the beautiful yellow garment fell down in the midst of those gallant monkey warriors who were like five Indras amongst the monkeys. This shining garment descended and landed on the summit of that mountain where the monkey warriors were sitting¹, like a flash of lightning first shining in the cloud and then landing on the top of a mountain.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 24 that precedes Doha no. 29.]

10: एवं हृतायां वैदेह्यां रामो हत्वा महामृगम्

निवृत्तो ददृशे धीमान्भ्रातरं लक्ष्मणं तदा

11: कथमुत्सृज्य वैदेहीं वने राक्षससेविते

इत्येवं भ्रातरं दृष्ट्वा प्राप्तोऽसीति व्यगर्हयत्

12: मृगरूपधरेणाथ राक्षसा सोऽपकर्षणम्

भ्रातुरागमनं चैव चिन्तयन्पर्यतप्यत

13: गर्हयन्नेव रामस्तु त्वरितस्तं समासदत्

अपि जीवति वैदेही नेति पश्यामि लक्ष्मण

14: तस्य तत्सर्वमाचख्यौ सीताया लक्ष्मणो वचः

यदुक्तवत्यसदृशं वैदेही पश्चिमं वचः

10: evaṃ hr̥tāyāṃ vaidehyāṃ rāmo hatvā mahāmṛgam
nivṛtto dadṛśe dhīmānbhrātaraṃ lakṣmaṇaṃ tadā

11: kathamutsrjya vaidehīm vane rākṣasasevite
ityevaṃ bhrātaraṃ dr̥ṣṭvā prāpto'sīti vyagarhayat

12: mṛgarūpadhareṇātha rakṣasā so'pakarṣaṇam
bhrāturāgamaṇaṃ caiva cintayanparyatapyata

13: garhayanneva rāmastu tvaritastaṃ samāsadat
api jīvati vaidehī neti paśyāmi lakṣmaṇa

14: tasya tatsarvamācakhyau sītāyā lakṣmaṇo vacaḥ
yaduktavatyasadr̥śaṃ vaidehī paścimaṃ vacaḥ

Verse no. 10: In the meanwhile when Vaidehi was thus being carried away by Ravana, the wise Lord Ram had killed the great deer (i.e. Marich disguised as a deer). After that, the Lord was returning back to his hermitage when he saw his brother Laxman come that way (and this made Lord Ram worried)¹.

Verse no. 11: On seeing his brother, Lord Ram rebuked him. “How could you leave Vaidehi in a forest infested with rakshasas (demons), (especially when I had instructed you to protect her)?²”

Verse no. 12: He thought about his being drawn away by a rakshasa in the form of a deer, and of his brother's arrival. Lord Ram was tormented by negative thoughts when he reflected on these twin events unfolding simultaneously; he saw these two developments as an ominous sign (and feared for the worse).

Verse no. 13: Lord Ram swiftly approached Laxman and said to him, “Oh Laxman, tell me if Vaidehi still alive? I have a grave hunch that I might not see her again³.”

Verse no. 14: Laxman then reported everything about what Sita had told him, including the reprehensible words that Vaidehi had spoken about him. {Laxman begged forgiveness from Lord Ram and told him he was not at all at fault because he was compelled to leave Sita alone and come to meet the Lord because she had thrown a tantrum, had used harsh and inappropriate words for him that cast serious aspersions on his character, accusing him of horrible things that were too much for him to cope with⁴.}

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 30.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 30.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

15: दह्यमानेन तु हृदा रामोऽभ्यपतदाश्रमम्
स ददर्श तदा गृध्रं निहतं पर्वतोपमम्
16: राक्षसं शङ्कमानस्तु विकृष्य बलवद्धनुः
अभ्यधावत काकुत्स्थस्ततस्तं सहलक्ष्मणः
17: स तावुवाच तेजस्वी सहितौ रामलक्ष्मणौ
गृध्रराजोऽस्मि भद्रं वां सखा दशरथस्य ह

15: dahyamānena tu hṛdā rāmo'bhyapatadāśramam
sa dadarśa tadā ṛdhrāṃ nihataṃ parvatopamam

16: rākṣasaṃ śaṅkamānastu vikṛṣya balavaddhanuḥ
abhyadhāvata kākutsthastatastaṃ sahalakṣmaṇaḥ

17: sa tāvuvāca tejasvī sahitaṃ rāmalakṣmaṇau
ṛdhrarājō'smi bhadraṃ vāṃ sakhā daśarathasya ha

Verse no. 15: With his heart burning in grief and tormented by uncertainty, Lord Ram went towards the hermitage. On the way he saw the fallen vulture Jatayu¹ who had such a massive physical form that he resembled a huge mountain (parvatopamam) rising from the surface of the earth.

Verse no. 16: Fearing that he was a rakshasa (a demon), Kakutstha (Lord Ram) drew his powerful bow, and accompanied by Laxman, he rushed towards the injured vulture.

Verse no. 17: Jatayu, though mortally wounded, still retained his energy. He gathered courage and calmly spoke to Lord Ram and Laxman: “I am the king of the vultures. Oh noble and glorious brothers! I am a friend of your father king Dashrath.”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

18: तस्य तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा संगृह्य धनुषी शुभे
कोऽयं पितरमस्माकं नाम्नाहेत्यूचतुश्च तौ
19: ततो ददृशतुस्तौ तं छिन्नपक्षद्वयं तथा
तयोः शशंस गृध्रस्तु सीतार्थं रावणाद्वधम्
20: अपृच्छद्राघवो गृध्रं रावणः कां दिशं गतः
तस्य गृध्रः शिरःकम्पैराचक्षे ममार च
21: दक्षिणामिति काकुत्स्थो विदित्वास्य तदिङ्गितम्
संस्कारं लम्भयामास सखायं पूजयन्पितुः

18: tasya tadvacanam śrutvā saṁgrhya dhanuṣī śubhe
ko'yaṁ pitaramasmākaṁ nāmnāhetyūcatuśca tau

19: tato dadṛśatustau taṁ chinnapakṣadvayaṁ tathā
tayoh śaśaṁsa ḡdhrastu sītārthe rāvaṇādvadham

20: apr̥cchadrāghavo ḡdhraṁ rāvaṇaḥ kām diśaṁ gataḥ
tasya ḡdhraḥ śiraḥkampairācacakṣe mamāra ca

21: dakṣiṇāmiti kākutstho viditvāsyā tadiṅgitam
saṁskāraṁ lambhayāmāsa sakhāyaṁ pūjayanpituḥ

Verse no. 18: On hearing these words, they put aside their powerful bows and asked, “Who are you that you mention our father’s name? Please tell us your name. {Lord Ram and Laxman were astonished to hear Jatayu saying that he was their father’s friend. So they immediately lowered their bow and became polite towards Jatayu.}

Verse no. 19: Then they saw that the wings of the bird had been severed, and that he was seriously wounded. The vulture then told that he has been brought to this misery on Sita’s account as Ravana had mortally wounded him with an intent to kill him because he had tried to defend her¹.

Verse no. 20: Raghava (Lord Ram) then asked the vulture for the direction in which Ravana had gone. Indicating this with a nod of his head, the vulture passed away².

Verse no. 21: Kakutstha understood the sign of the gesture to mean the south direction. Then Lord Ram performed the last rites of Jatayu to honour him as he was a friend of the Lord’s father, in the same way as he would have done for his father Dashrath³.

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 31.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32.]

22: ततो दृष्ट्वाश्रमपदं व्यपविद्धबृसीघटम्

विध्वस्तकलशं शून्यं गोमायुबलसेवितम्

23: दुःखशोकसमाविष्टौ वैदेहीहरणादितौ

जग्मतुर्दण्डकारण्यं दक्षिणेन परंतपौ

22: tato dr̥ṣṭvāśramapadaṃ vyapavidhabṛsīghaṭam
vidhvastakalaśaṃ śūnyaṃ gomāyubalasevitam

23: duḥkhaśokasamāviṣṭau vaidehīharaṇārditau
jagmatuṛdaṇḍakāraṇyaṃ dakṣiṇena paramtapau

Verse no. 22: They saw many hermitages on the way with their seats and vessels scattered about and all the pots broken. The place was deserted and infested with an army of jackals¹.

Verse no. 23: Both Lord Ram and Laxman were already suffering from an overwhelming sense of grief and distress at Sita's abduction, and this sight of plundered hermitages of ascetics and hermits added to their agony and misery.

Feeling sad and miserable at the unfortunate developments, the two warrior brothers, who were scorchers of enemies, headed south, towards Dandakaranya forest².

[Note—¹The demons would attack these remote hermitages, killing the hermits and ascetics living there before destroying the hermitages and scattering all the belongings of the inhabitants.

²The 'Dandakaranya forest' was that part of the wild forest which was very inhabitable and fierce. It was extremely dense with thick creepers, large grass and huge trees with branches jutting out like thick arms. Sunlight rarely reached the ground, and navigation through it was an impossible prospect. Most ferocious demons and wild animals inhabited this part of the wilderness which was out of bounds for humans.]

24: वने महति तस्मिंस्तु रामः सौमित्रिणा सह

ददर्श मृगयूथानि द्रवमाणानि सर्वशः

शब्दं च घोरं सत्त्वानां दावाग्नेरिव वर्धतः

25: अपश्येतां मुहूर्ताच्च कबन्धं घोरदर्शनम्
मेघपर्वतसंकाशं शालस्कन्धं महाभुजम्
उरोगतविशालाक्षं महोदरमहामुखम्

24: vane mahati tasmimstu rāmaḥ saumitriṇā saha
dadarśa mṛgayūthāni dravamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ
śabdaṃ ca ghoraṃ sattvānāṃ dāvāgneriva vardhataḥ

25: apaśyetāṃ muhūrtācca kabandhaṃ ghoradarśanam
meghaparvatasamkāśaṃ śālaskandhaṃ mahābhujam
urogataviśālākṣaṃ mahodaramahāmukham

{The following verses describe Lord Ram's and Laxman's encounter with a fierce demon named Kabandha who had an unconventional form like that of a giant octopus, and the death of this demon at the hands of Lord Ram.}

Verse no. 24: In that great forest, Lord Ram and Laxman saw many herds of deer running in different directions. They heard the terrible and blood-chilling cries of many wild creatures, increasingly roaring like a forest fire.

Verse no. 25: In a short while, they saw Kabandha¹, a demon with a terrible and ghastly form. He was dark and foreboding like a storm cloud or a mountain with huge gaping caves on its sides. His shoulders were as extensive as a shala tree². He had large arms. His enormous large eyes were located on his chest. He had a giant mouth on a giant belly. {In effect, Kabandha resembled a giant octopus³.}

[Note—¹Lord Ram's encounter with Kabandha and the latter's killing has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas too, in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34.

²The 'shala tree' is a hardwood tree native to India, and its scientific name is 'Shorea robusta'. It is also called Indian Dammer, or Yellow Balau tree.

³This entire episode of encounter with Kabandha and his deliverance at the hands of Lord Ram has been described in detail in 'Adhyatma Ramayan' of Veda Vyas, in its Aranya Kand, Canto 9.]

26: यदृच्छयाथ तद्रक्षः करे जग्राह लक्ष्मणम्
विषादमगमत्सद्यः सौमित्रिरथ भारत
27: स राममभिसंप्रेक्ष्य कृष्यते येन तन्मुखम्
विषण्णश्चाब्रवीद्रामं पश्यावस्थामिमां मम
28: हरणं चैव वैदेह्या मम चायमुपप्लवः
राज्यभ्रंशश्च भवतस्तातस्य मरणं तथा

29: नाहं त्वां सह वैदेह्या समेतं कोसलागतम्
द्रक्ष्यामि पृथिवीराज्ये पितृपैतामहे स्थितम्

30: द्रक्ष्यन्त्यार्यस्य धन्या ये कुशलाजशमीलवैः
अभिषिक्तस्य वदनं सोमं साभ्रलवं यथा

31: एवं बहुविधं धीमान्विललाप स लक्ष्मणः

तमुवाचाथ काकुत्स्थः संभ्रमेष्वप्यसंभ्रमः

32: मा विषीद नरव्याघ्र नैष कश्चिन्मयि स्थिते

छिन्ध्यस्य दक्षिणं बाहुं छिन्नः सव्यो मया भुजः

26: yadrcchayātha tadrakṣaḥ kare jagrāha lakṣmaṇam
viṣādamagamatsadyaḥ saumitriratha bhārata

27: sa rāmamabhisamprekṣya kṛṣyate yena tanmukham
viṣaṇṇaścābravīdrāmaṇ paśyāvasthāmimāṇ mama

28: haraṇaṇ caiva vaidehyā mama cāyamupaplavaḥ
rājyabhraṇśaśca bhavatastātasya maraṇaṇ tathā

29: nāhaṇ tvāṇ saha vaidehyā sametaṇ kosalāgatam
drakṣyāmi pṛthivīrājye pitṛpaitāmahe sthitam

30: drakṣyantyāryasya dhanyā ye kuśalājaśamīlavaiḥ
abhiṣiktasya vadaṇaṇ somaṇ sābhralavaṇ yathā

31: evaṇ bahuvidhaṇ dhīmānvilālāpa sa lakṣmaṇaḥ
tamuvācātha kākutsthaḥ sambhrameṣvapyasambhramaḥ

32: mā viṣīda naravyāghra naiṣa kaścinmayi sthite
chindhyasya dakṣiṇaṇ bāhuṇ chinnaḥ savyo mayā bhujāḥ

Verse no. 26: With great ease, the rakshasa (Kabandha) grasped Laxman in his tentacle-like long arms.”

Continuing his narration, sage Markandeya said to Yudhisthira: “Oh descendant of the Bharata lineage! Soumitri (Laxman) was instantly overcome with immense grief and despair.

Verse no. 27: Then, glancing towards Lord Ram, Kabandha dragged Laxman towards his mouth in order to devour him. Laxman was filled with sorrow and despair. With a heavy heart, Laxman lamented helplessly, feeling remorseful and dejected beyond measure. He turned towards Lord Ram who was standing nearby, and poured out the grief of his heart before the Lord as follows—

Verse no. 28: “My dear brother, look at my miserable and pitiable state; how unlucky I am. {My dear brother, I feel so sorry. I don’t know what sin I had committed in my life that I have to face such a precarious situation as I find myself in.} Firstly, Vaidehi

(Sita) has been abducted. Then I land in this dire state and find myself in the grip of a ferocious demon (who is about to devour me). To add to my miserable fate, you have been dislodged from your kingdom, and our father (Dashrath) is dead. All these developments are weighing heavily on my distressed heart. {Say, what worse can a person expect to face in his life? One misfortune after another: enough to break the courage and resilience of even the sternest of hearts!}

Verse no. 29: It seems that now I, along with Vaidehi, will not witness your return to Kosala (Ayodhya) and your reinstatement as king on the ancestral throne of the ancient kingdom of our father and forerfathers. {To wit, my dear brother, what a twist of ill fate is this and how unfortunate I am that both myself and Sita would no longer be able to witness you being crowned as the king of Ayodhya, because this demon is about to devour me, and Sita has been abducted by a ferocious demon king of a far away land of Lanka.}

Verse no. 30: Fortunate are those who will see you being anointed on the throne of the kingdom with full rituals and ceremonies involving consecration with kusha grass, rice grains and sap of the shami wood (kuśalājaśamīlavaiḥ). During those auspicious moments, you will look glorious and resplendent like a full moon amidst scattered clouds.”

{Here, the ‘scattered cloud’ refers to the misfortunes that had surrounded Lord Ram for the last fourteen years when he was exiled to the forest and had to suffer immense hardships there. Now since that bad time was over, he was being crowned as the king of Ayodhya. The ‘scattering of clouds’ refer to those bad times.}

Verse no. 31: In this way, the wise Laxman lamented in various ways. Undaunted in the midst of this calamity, Kakutstha (Lord Ram) remained calm and composed. He consoled and encouraged Laxman to show courage and resilience for which he is so famous, telling the latter not to lose hope and feel so dejected while he (Lord Ram) was there.

Verse no. 32: Lord Ram told Laxman: “Oh tiger amongst men! Do not be immersed in sorrow in this fashion. While I am here, there is nothing he (Kabandha) can do to you. Slice off his right arm, and I will sever the left. {Obviously then he will be forced to release you from his vice-like grip. Let us act like warriors, and not like cowards who timidly surrender to their fate.}”

33: इत्येवं वदता तस्य भुजो रामेण पातितः

खड्गेन भृशतीक्ष्णेन निकृत्तस्तिलकाण्डवत्

34: ततोऽस्य दक्षिणं बाहुं खड्गेनाजघ्निवान्बली

सौमित्रिरपि संप्रेक्ष्य भ्रातरं राघवं स्थितम्

35: पुनरभ्याहनत्पाश्वे तद्रक्षो लक्ष्मणो भृशम्

गतासुरपतङ्गमौ कबन्धः सुमहांस्ततः

36: तस्य देहाद्विनिःसृत्य पुरुषो दिव्यदर्शनः

ददृशे दिवमास्थाय दिवि सूर्य इव ज्वलन्

33: ityevaṃ vadatā tasya bhujo rāmeṇa pātitaḥ
khaḍgena bhr̥śatikṣṇena nikṛttastilakāṇḍavat

34: tato'sya dakṣiṇaṃ bāhuṃ khaḍgenājaghnivānbali
saumitirapi saṃprekṣya bhr̥taraṃ rāghavaṃ sthitam

35: punarabhyāhanatpārśve tadrakṣo lakṣmaṇo bhr̥śam
gatāsurapatadbhūmau kabandhaḥ sumahāṃstataḥ

36: tasya dehādviniḥsr̥tya puruṣo divyadarśanaḥ
dadṛśe divamāsthāya divi sūrya iva jvalan

Verse no. 33: While he was speaking, Lord Ram lost no time and cut off the demon's left arm with his extremely sharp sword, as if it was branch of the seasam tree.

Verse no. 34: On seeing his brother Raghava standing there with firmness in his demeanours, the powerful Soumitri (Laxman) acted swiftly and hacked the right arm of the demon with his sword.

Verse no. 35: Lakshmana repeatedly smote the rakshasa on his side and losing his life, the gigantic Kabandha fell down on the ground.

Verse no. 36: Then a divine-looking being was seen to emerge from his body. He was stationed in the sky with a radiant body, like the shining sun seen in the sky¹.

[Note—¹Kabandha was a Gandharva, a member of the community of junior gods in heaven. He had become a demon by the curse of sage Durbasa who had the reputation of giving curses at the slightest provocation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 33.

The fact that Kabandha was a Gandharva is reiterated in verse no. 38 herein below, but in this verse Kabandha says he became a demon due to the creator Brahma's curse unlike what he told Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas that he became a demon due to sage Durbasa's curse.]

37: पप्रच्छ रामस्तं वाग्मी कस्त्वं प्रब्रूहि पृच्छतः

कामया किमिदं चित्रमाश्चर्यं प्रतिभाति मे

38: तस्याचक्षे गन्धर्वो विश्वावसुरहं नृप

प्राप्तो ब्रह्मानुशापेन योनिं राक्षससेविताम्

39: रावणेन हता सीता राज्ञा लङ्कानिवासिना

सुग्रीवमभिगच्छस्व स ते साहयं करिष्यति

40: एषा पम्पा शिवजला हंसकारण्डवायुता

ऋश्यमूकस्य शैलस्य संनिकर्षे तटाकिनी

41: संवसत्यत्र सुग्रीवश्चतुर्भिः सचिवैः सह
भ्राता वानरराजस्य वालिनो हेममालिनः

37: papraccha rāmastaṃ vāgmī kastvaṃ prabrūhi prcchataḥ
kāmayā kimidaṃ citramāścaryaṃ pratibhāti me

38: tasyācacakṣe gandharvo viśvāvasuraḥ nṛpa
prāpto brahmānuśāpena yoniṃ rākṣasasevitām

39: rāvaṇena hr̥tā sītā rājñā laṅkānivāsinā
sugrīvamabhiḡacchasva sa te sāhyaṃ kariṣyati

40: eṣā pampā śivajalā haṃsakāraṇḍavāyutā
r̥śyamūkasya śailasya saṃnikarṣe taṭākinī

41: saṃvasatyatra sugrīvaścaturbhiḥ sacivaiḥ saha
bhrātā vānararājasya vālino hemamālinaḥ

Verse no. 37: Then Lord Ram spoke to him articulately: “Who are you? I am asking you. Please tell me in clear terms. How did this happen? It seems to me to be very extraordinary (that though you have such a fearful and ghastly body, yet when you died your soul left its mortal body to emerge with a radiant form which shone like the glorious sun shining in the sky; it is so stunning that I want to know the secret behind it).”

Verse no. 38: Kabandha replied: “Oh noble king! I am the gandharva by the name of Vishvasasu. Because of Brahma's curse, I had to take birth as a demon from the womb of a female rakshasa.

Verse no. 39: Sita has been abducted by king Ravana who resides in Lanka. Go to Sugriv and he will help you.

Verse no. 40: Lake Pampa is near Mount Rishyamukha. It has pure water and teems with swans and ducks.

Verse no. 41: Sugriv lives there with four advisers. He is the brother of Vaali, the king of the monkeys who wears a golden garland (vālino hemamālinaḥ).

42: एतावच्छक्यमस्माभिर्वक्तुं द्रष्टासि जानकीम्
ध्रुवं वानरराजस्य विदितो रावणालयः
43: इत्युक्त्वान्तर्हितो दिव्यः पुरुषः स महाप्रभः
विस्मयं जग्मतुश्चोभौ तौ वीरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ

42: etāvacchakyamasmbāhīrvaktuṃ draṣṭāsi jānakīm
dhruvaṃ vānararājasya vidito rāvaṇālayaḥ

43: ityuktvāntarhito divyaḥ puruṣaḥ sa mahāprabhaḥ
vismayaṃ jagmatuścobhau tau vīrau rāmalakṣmaṇau

Verse no. 42: I can tell you this much that be rest assured that in due course of time you will see Janaki (Sita) again. It is certain that the prince of the monkeys (i.e. Sugriv) knows about Ravana's abode.”

Verse no. 43: Markandeya said: “Having said this, to the amazement of the brave Lord Ram and Laxman, the extremely radiant celestial being disappeared from sight as he went back to his heavenly abode.¹”

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 34.

So we see here that Kabandha guides the two brothers towards Mt. Rishyamook where they would meet Sugriv and other monkey warriors who would help them find and later on recover Sita. This next part of the story of the Ramayana is known as Kishkindha Kand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 1.]

Thus ends Canto 263.

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Canto 264:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततोऽविदूरे नलिनीं प्रभूतकमलोत्पलाम्
सीताहरणदुःखार्तः पम्पां रामः समासदत्

2: मारुतेन सुशीतेन सुखेनामृतगन्धिना
सेव्यमानो वने तस्मिञ्जगाम मनसा प्रियाम्

3: विललाप स राजेन्द्रस्तत्र कान्तामनुस्मरन्
कामबाणाभिसंतप्तः सौमित्रिस्तमथाब्रवीत्

4: न त्वामेवंविधो भावः स्प्रष्टुमर्हति मानद
आत्मवन्तमिव व्याधिः पुरुषं वृद्धशीलिनम्

5: प्रवृत्तिरुपलब्धा ते वैदेह्या रावणस्य च
तां त्वं पुरुषकारेण बुद्ध्या चैवोपपादय

6: अभिगच्छाव सुग्रीवं शैलस्थं हरिपुंगवम्
मयि शिष्ये च भृत्ये च सहाये च समाश्वस

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tato'vidūre nalinīm prabhūtakamalotpalām
sītāharaṇaduḥkhārtāḥ pampām rāmaḥ samāsadat

2: mārutena suśītena sukhenāmṛtagandhinā
sevyamāno vane tasmiñjagāma manasā priyām

3: vilalāpa sa rājendrastatra kāntāmanusmaran
kāmaḥbāṇābhisamṛtaptāḥ saumitristamathābravīt

4: na tvāmevaṃvidho bhāvaḥ spraṣṭumarhati mānada
ātmavantamiva vyādhiḥ puruṣaṃ vṛddhaśīlinam

5: pravṛttirupalabdhā te vaidehyā rāvaṇasya ca
tām tvam puruṣakāreṇa buddhyā caivopapādaya

6: abhigacchāva sugrīvaṃ śailasthaṃ haripuṃgavam
mayi śiṣye ca bhṛtye ca sahāye ca samāśvasa

{The following verses describe Lord Ram's grief over Sita's abduction, his alliance with Sugriv to defeat Vaali, and subsequent efforts to find out about the whereabouts of Sita and rescue her from the clutches of Ravana of Lanka.}

Verse no.1: Markandeya said: “Miserable at Sita's abduction, Lord Ram proceeded to Lake Pampa (as advised by Kabandha). The Pampa Lake was a short distance away, and was a lively place. The lake was full of lotuses and water lilies of various hues.

Verse no. 2: The wind was very pleasant and cool, and it carried the aromatic fragrance resembling the scent of nectar. In this enchanting environment, Lord Ram's mind turned to his beloved Sita, and her absence only stoked his sense of grief and distress. He lamented, and felt forlorn and remorseful.

Verse no. 3: Lord Ram, who was like Indra (king of gods) amongst the kings on earth, remembered his beloved wife Sita. He lamented and grieved for her as arrows shot by cupid (i.e. arrows of love and longing) wounded his already sorrowful heart. Observing his distressed state of mind, his brother Laxman consoled him very lovingly like a true friend would in times of distress, encouraging Lord Ram to show resilience, and have courage and fortitude.

Verse no. 4: “Oh honourable one! Such emotions should not bother you, they do not behove of an honourable person who is wise, has control over his mind and heart, and lives a dispassionate life knowing that everything is transient in this mortal world. You should behave like self-controlled man who is not moved by the pains of diseases of the body, and remains calm and poised during all adverse circumstances that he may encounter in this material world.

Verse no. 5: You have already obtained information about Vaidehi (Sita) and Ravana. {Kabandha as well as Jatayu have told you who has taken her away, and in which direction she has gone.}

Now use manliness, strength of arms, courage and intelligence to recover her, instead of timidly lamenting for her as it would serve no useful purpose.

Verse no. 6: Let us go to Sugriv, the bull amongst monkeys, who lives on the summit of the nearby mountain (i.e. the Rishyamook Mountain, as advised by Kabandha). My dear brother, please have courage and be comforted, since I, your disciple, servant and aide, am with you.

{You are not alone; you have a strong, able, competent and powerful brother by your side, one who will do everything to bring cheer to you. Getting Sita back is just a matter of time, but lamenting and grieving is not the option to fulfil this objective. We must act bravely, like manly warriors who never despair, who never lose hope, and who face adversities head-on. This positive attitude would ultimately lead to victory and success. Trust me brother, we will succeed. Hence, please stop procrastinating and thinking negatively about the situation. To succeed, we have to pick up our courage and act manly, with fortitude and resilience. Ups and downs in life is part of the game, and those who take it in their stride win the game.}

7: एवं बहुविधैर्वाक्यैर्लक्ष्मणेन स राघवः

उक्तः प्रकृतिमापेदे कार्ये चानन्तरोऽभवत्

8: निषेव्य वारि पम्पायास्तर्पयित्वा पितृनपि

प्रतस्थतुरुभौ वीरौ भ्रातरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ

9: तावृश्यमूकमभ्येत्य बहुमूलफलं गिरिम्

गिर्यग्रे वानरान्पञ्च वीरौ ददृशतुस्तदा

7: evaṃ bahuvidhairvākyairlakṣmaṇena sa rāghavaḥ
uktaḥ prakṛtimāpede kārye cānantaro'bhavat

8: niṣevya vāri pampāyāstarpayitvā pitṛnapi
pratasthaturubhau vīrau bhrātarau rāmalakṣmaṇau

9: tāvṛśyamūkamabhyetya bahumūlaphalaṃ girim
giryagre vānarānpañca vīrau dadṛśatustadā

Verse no. 7: Consoled thus by Laxman, Lord Ram recovered his composure and focused his attention at the work at hand. {Lord Ram regained his courage and thanked Laxman for his emotional support, and for standing by him at a time when the Lord needed help, encouragement and support the most.}

Verse no. 8: The brave brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, bathed in the waters of Lake Pampa. After rendering offerings to the ancestors and paying obeisance to them, they departed from the lake (to move onwards in their journey towards Mt. Rishyamook).

Verse no. 9: They reached Mount Rishyamukha which had many types of edible roots and fruits¹. The brave ones saw the five monkeys sitting on the summit of this mountain.

[Note—¹This was the reason why Sugriv and his companions had selected this particular mountain for residence after Sugriv was ousted by his brother Vaali due to some misunderstanding between the two brothers. Obviously they needed something to eat, and this mountain provided them ample edible roots and fruits. For water, they had access to Pampa Lake.]

10: सुग्रीवः प्रेषयामास सचिवं वानरं तयोः

बुद्धिमन्तं हनूमन्तं हिमवन्तमिव स्थितम्

11: तेन संभाष्य पूर्व तौ सुग्रीवमभिजग्मतुः

सख्यं वानरराजेन चक्रे रामस्ततो नृप

10: sugrīvaḥ preṣayāmāsa sacivaṃ vānaraṃ tayoh
buddhimantaṃ hanūmantaṃ himavantamiva sthitam

11: tena saṁbhāṣya pūrvam tau sugrīvamabhijagmatuḥ
sakhyam vānararājena cakre rāmastato nrpa

Verse no. 10: When Sugriv saw the two warriors from the top of the mountain, he sent his wise and trusted adviser and aide named Hanuman, who was as tall as a mountain, to go down to meet the two brothers (and find out who they were and the purpose of their visit to this part of a desolate and remote part of the forest surrounded by mountains and hills where humans had not ventured earlier in any living memory)¹.

Verse no. 11: After mutual introduction and exchange of pleasantries, Hanuman took the two brothers up the mountain to meet Sugriv. Oh king (Yudhisthira)! Lord Ram then had an agreement of friendship with the king of the monkeys (Sugriv)².

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 1.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5.]

12: तद्वासो दर्शयामासुस्तस्य कार्यं निवेदिते

वानराणां तु यत्सीता ह्रियमाणाभ्यवासृजत्

13: तत्प्रत्ययकरं लब्ध्वा सुग्रीवं प्लवगाधिपम्

पृथिव्यां वानरैश्वर्यं स्वयं रामोऽभ्यषेचयत्

14: प्रतिजज्ञे च काकुत्स्थः समरे वालिनो वधम्

सुग्रीवश्चापि वैदेह्याः पुनरानयनं नृप

15: इत्युक्त्वा समयं कृत्वा विश्वास्य च परस्परम्

अभ्येत्य सर्वे किष्किन्धां तस्थुर्युद्धाभिकाङ्क्षिणः

12: tadvāso darśayāmāsustasya kārye nivedite
vānarāṇaṃ tu yatsītā hriyamāṇābhyavāsrjat

13: tatpratrayakaram labdhvā sugrīvaṃ plavagādhipam
pṛthivyāṃ vānaraśvārye svayaṃ rāmo'bhyaṣecayat

14: pratijajñe ca kākutsthaḥ samare vāline vadham
sugrīvaścāpi vaidehyāḥ punarānayanam nṛpa

15: ityuktvā samayaṃ kṛtvā viśvāsyā ca parasparam
abhyetya sarve kiṣkindhāṃ tasthuryuddhābhikāṅkṣiṇaḥ

Verse no. 12: When Lord Ram told the group of monkey warriors about the purpose of his visit and what misfortune had afflicted him (i.e. about Sita's abduction and their subsequent efforts to find and recover her from the clutches of her abductor), Sugriv displayed the garment that Sita had dropped while she was being abducted¹.

Verse no. 13: Then, to help his friend Lord Ram, Sugriv, the prince of monkeys, promised that he would do everything possible to help the Lord (to find Sita and recover her from the clutches of her abductors)².

Having thus obtained assurance from Sugriv, Lord Ram decided to reciprocate Sugriv's friendly gesture and the latter's promise of finding Sita and recovering her, by ensuring that Sugriv gets his right to the throne of Kishkindha and be reinstated as the heir to the throne, thereby becoming the king of all the monkeys on earth. This was only feasible by eliminating his rival Vaali who had kicked Sugriv out and usurped his rights³.

{Lord Ram wished to oblige Sugriv and show that the Lord is his true well-wisher. This was a prudent and wise step for Lord Ram, because once he helped Sugriv regain his rights over the throne of Kishkindha, the latter would be morally under obligation to reciprocate and help Lord Ram as he had promised a while earlier. Besides this, the Lord was fully aware that to retrieve Sita from the clutches of a powerful and ferocious king of the demon race whose capital Lanka was situated on a far-away island, it was absolutely necessary to have the support of an army, and towards this objective Sugriv's help was crucial as the latter had a huge army of Kishkindha at his disposal. From a practical point of view, it was simply not possible for Lord Ram and Laxman to achieve success in such a gigantic task without help.}

Verse no. 14: Kakutstha (Lord Ram) also promised Sugriv to kill his arch rival Vaali in battle⁴. Oh king (Yudhisthira)! In return, Sugriv promised to bring Sita back.

Verse no. 15: Having thus concluded an agreement and having reposed trust in each other, all of them went to Kishkindha and based themselves there, desirous of doing battle (with Vaali)⁵.

[Refer: ¹Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 5.

Refer: ²Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 5.

Refer: ³Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-14 that precede Doha no. 6.

Refer: ⁴Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 6; (ii) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 7.

Refer: ⁵Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 25-26 that precede Doha no. 7.]

16: सुग्रीवः प्राप्य किष्किन्धां ननादौघनिभस्वनः

नास्य तन्ममृषे वाली तं तारा प्रत्यषेधयत्

17: यथा नदति सुग्रीवो बलवानेष वानरः

मन्ये चाश्रयवान्प्राप्तो न त्वं निर्गन्तुमर्हसि

18: हेममाली ततो वाली तारां ताराधिपाननाम्

प्रोवाच वचनं वाग्मी तां वानरपतिः पतिः

19: सर्वभूतरुतज्ञा त्वं पश्य बुद्ध्या समन्विता

केनापाश्रयवान्प्राप्तो ममैष भ्रातृगन्धिकः

16: sugrīvaḥ prāpya kiṣkindhāṃ nanādaughanibhasvanah
nāsyā tanmamṛṣe vālī taṃ tārā pratyāṣedhayat

17: yathā nadati sugrīvo balavāṇeṣa vānarah
manyē cāśrayavānprāpto na tvaṃ nirgantumarhasi

18: hemamālī tato vālī tārāṃ tārādhipānanām
provāca vacanaṃ vāgmī tāṃ vānarapatiḥ patiḥ

19: sarvabhūtarutajñā tvaṃ paśya buddhyā samanvitā
kenāpāśrayavānprāpto mamaīṣa bhrātrgandhikah

Verse no. 16: Having reached the capital city of Kishkindha, Sugriv let out a giant roar, like the noise of a flood. Vaali could not tolerate this¹.

Verse no. 17: But Tara (Vaali's wife) restrained him and said, 'From the manner in which the mighty monkey Sugriv is roaring, I think that he has obtained a protector. You should not go out (for the situation seems to be too dangerous for you)².

Verse no. 18: At that, the eloquent Vaali, who was the king of the monkeys and adorned with a golden garland, told Tara, whose face was as radiant as the moon, the lord of the stars in the sky as follows--

Verse no. 19: "My dear. You are familiar with the voices of all living beings, and you are intelligent enough to decipher them and know about the identity of the speaker. So therefore, it is now the time to put your unique skills to work, and find out whose protection this brother of mine has obtained, with whom he has allied to gain enough

courage to come and challenge me here in my own city. {As you know, Sugriv has no guts to face me under ordinary circumstances, so obviously he has found someone who is very strong, able and powerful enough to protect him against me. Please use your skills to determine who this gentleman is.}"

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 26-27 that precede Doha no. 7.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 27 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

20: चिन्तयित्वा मुहूर्तं तु तारा ताराधिपप्रभा
पतिमित्यब्रवीत्प्राज्ञा शृणु सर्वं कपीश्वर
21: हृतदारो महासत्त्वो रामो दशरथात्मजः
तुल्यारिमित्रतां प्राप्तः सुग्रीवेण धनुर्धरः
22: भ्राता चास्य महाबाहुः सौमित्रिरपराजितः
लक्ष्मणो नाम मेधावी स्थितः कार्यार्थसिद्धये
23: मैन्दश्च दिवविदश्चैव हनूमांश्चानिलात्मजः
जाम्बवानृक्षराजश्च सुग्रीवसचिवाः स्थिताः
24: सर्व एते महात्मानो बुद्धिमन्तो महाबलाः
अलं तव विनाशाय रामवीर्यव्यपाश्रयात्

20: cintayitvā muhūrtaṃ tu tāra tāradhipaprabhā
patimityabravītprājñā śṛṇu sarvaṃ kapīśvara

21: hr̥tadāro mahāsattvo rāmo daśarathātmajaḥ
tulyārimitrataṃ prāptaḥ sugrīveṇa dhanurdharaḥ

22: bhrātā cāsyā mahābāhuḥ saumitriraparājitaḥ
lakṣmaṇo nāma medhāvī sthitaḥ kāryārthasiddhaye

23: maindaśca dvividaścaiva hanūmāṃścānilātmajaḥ
jāmbavānr̥kṣarājaśca sugrīvasacivāḥ sthitāḥ

24: sarva ete mahātmāno buddhimanto mahābalāḥ
alaṃ tava vināśāya rāmavīryavyapāśrayāt

Verse no. 20: Tara, with radiance like that of the moon, the lord of the stars, thought for a while. Then, using her wisdom and prudence, she spoke to her husband: "Oh lord of the monkeys! Listen to everything calmly.

Verse no. 21: The immensely powerful Lord Ram is king Dashrath's son. He has lost his wife. He is an expert archer. He has made a contract of an agreement of friendship with Sugriv, whereby an enemy of one friend is also an enemy of the other friend.

{To wit, if you are Sugriv's enemy, it is deemed that you are an enemy of Sugriv's friend, Lord Ram, too. Similarly, Lord Ram's enemy is the person who has abducted his wife, and therefore that person (in this case Ravana) is Sugriv's enemy too. It's a mutual two-way contract, and is the basis on which their friendship agreement stands. So therefore, although Lord Ram has no direct ill-will with you and neither you have any issue with the Lord at the personal level, but the terms of this friendship between Lord Ram and Sugriv obliges the former to offer his help to the latter to tackle his own enemy, which is you.}

Verse no. 22: Lord Ram's brother Laxman is equally strong, has powerful arms, and is an expert archer. He is the son of Sumitra. Laxman always stands by the side of his brother Lord Ram, and the two work in coordination with each other to accomplish the task at hand¹.

Verse no. 23: Mainda, Dvividha, the wind-god's son Hanuman and Jambavan, the king of the bears, are Sugriv's advisers and stand by him.

Verse no. 24: All these great warriors are immensely strong, mighty and intelligent. With valiant Lord Ram's support, there is nothing that they can't do or achieve, and under the present situation they are strong enough to ensure your destruction."

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 28-29 that precede Doha no. 7.]

25: तस्यास्तदाक्षिप्य वचो हितमुक्तं कपीश्वरः

पर्यशङ्कत तामीर्षुः सुग्रीवगतमानसाम्

26: तारां परुषमुक्त्वा स निर्जगाम गुहामुखात्

स्थितं माल्यवतोऽभ्याशे सुग्रीवं सोऽभ्यभाषत

27: असकृत्त्वं मया मूढ निर्जितो जीवितप्रियः

मुक्तो ज्ञातिरिति ज्ञात्वा का त्वरा मरणे पुनः

25: tasyāstadākṣipya vaco hitamuktaṁ kapīśvaraḥ
paryaśaṅkata tāmīrṣuḥ sugrīvagatamānasām

26: tārāṁ paruṣamuktṡvā sa nirjagāma guhāmukhāt
sthitam mālyavato'bhyāśe sugrīvaṁ so'bhyabhāṣata

27: asakṛttvaṁ mayā mūḍha nirjito jīvitapriyaḥ
mukto jñātiriti jñātvā kā tvarā maraṇe punaḥ

Verse no. 25: But Vaali, the lord of the monkeys, disregarded her words, which would have ensured his welfare. He was full of jealousy and suspected her integrity, thinking that her mind was attracted towards Sugriv.

Verse no. 26: Having spoken harshly to Tara, he emerged from the mouth of his cave. He went to Sugriv, who was stationed near Malyavan (the hill on which he had taken refuge)¹ and roared angrily when he confronted Sugriv:

Verse no. 27: "Oh you foolish fellow! You are under some delusion. You have been defeated by me many times earlier. Considering our relationship (that you are my brother), I have spared your life earlier. But say, why do you wish to rush to your death again; why do you want to court death which you are certain to have if you dare to challenge me for a duel once again?"

[Note--¹In all probability, there was a tunnel dug inside the mountains, and one of its ends was near the capital city, and the other end opened in the countryside near the base of Mt. Malyawan where Sugriv lived. Vaali used to keep an eye on Sugriv through this secret tunnel.]

28: इत्युक्तः प्राह सुग्रीवो भ्रातरं हेतुमद्वचः

प्राप्तकालममित्रघ्नो रामं संबोधयन्निव

29: हृतदारस्य मे राजन्हृतराज्यस्य च त्वया

किं नु जीवितसामर्थ्यमिति विद्धि समागतम्

28: ityuktaḥ prāha sugrīvo bhrātaram hetumadvacaḥ
prāptakālamamitraghno rāmaṁ sambodhayanniva

29: hr̥tadārasya me rājanhr̥tarājyasya ca tvayā
kiṁ nu jīvitasāmarthyamiti viddhi samāgatam

Verse no. 28: When Sugriv heard his brother Vaali asking him the reason why he has come to challenge him again, Sugriv glanced at Lord Ram to indicate to the Lord that the time for the final show-down has come.

Verse no. 29: Then Sugriv replied to Vaali: "Oh king! You have already dealt a double-blow to me by robbing my wife as well as my right to the throne of the kingdom (by throwing me out). What is the purpose of being alive in this situation; how does living or dying make a difference to me now? That is the reason I have approached you, and I have come prepared for everything, for every eventuality."

30: एवमुक्त्वा बहुविधं ततस्तौ संनिपेततुः

समरे वालिसुग्रीवौ शालतालशिलायुधौ

31: उभौ जघ्नतुरन्योन्यमुभौ भूमौ निपेततुः

उभौ ववल्गतुश्चित्रं मुष्टिभिश्च निजघ्नतुः

32: उभौ रुधिरसंसिक्तौ नखदन्तपरिक्षतौ

शुशुभाते तदा वीरौ पुष्पिताविव किंशुकौ

33: न विशेषस्तयोर्युद्धे तदा कश्चन दृश्यते
सुग्रीवस्य तदा मालां हनूमान्कण्ठ आसजत्

30: evamuktivā bahuvīdham tatastau samnipetatuḥ
samare vālisugrīvau śālatālaśīlāyudhau

31: ubhau jaghnaturanyonyamubhau bhūmau nipetatuḥ
ubhau vavalgatuścitraṁ muṣṭibhiśca nijaghnatuḥ

32: ubhau rudhirasaṁsiktau nakhadantaparīkṣatau
śuśubhāte tadā vīrau puṣpitāviva kiṁśukau

33: na viśeṣastayoryuddhe tadā kaścana dṛśyate
sugrīvasya tadā mālāṁ hanūmānkaṇṭha āsajat

Verse no. 30: Speaking to each other with these harsh words, Vaali and Sugriv engaged in a combat, using large tree trunks and boulders as weapons.

Verse no. 31: They punched each other fiercely, each flinging his opponent repeatedly on the ground. Both of them adopted different postures and tactics, trying to out-wit and out-manoeuvre the opponent. Fighting fiercely, they struck each other violently with their clenched fists.

Verse no. 32: Both of them dripped with blood, and the fight was so vicious that both of them got lacerated when they dug their nails and teeth on the opponent's body. Those brave warriors, with blood soaked bodies, resembled blossoming kimshukas trees¹.

[Note: ¹The Kimshuka tree bears flowers of red colour. The botanical name of the tree is 'Butea monosperma' or 'Butea fondosa'; it is also known as the 'Parrot Tree' because its flowers are shaped like the beak of a parrot; or as the 'flame of the forest' because of its fiery red colour; in Hindi it is also known as the Palash flower.]

Verse no. 33: No difference could be detected between the two fighters. Then Hanuman placed a garland around Sugriv's neck (for the purpose of identification). {Symbolically, this garland was a de-facto 'victory garland' for Sugriv. Hanuman, with this gesture, not only identified Sugriv, who was locked in a close hand-to-hand combat with Vaali, but also indicated to Sugriv that his victory is a certainty. This garland would help Lord Ram to identify Sugriv when he would shoot an arrow to kill Vaali.}

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

34: स मालया तदा वीरः शुशुभे कण्ठसक्तया
श्रीमानिव महाशैलो मलयो मेघमालया

35: कृतचिह्नं तु सुग्रीवं रामो दृष्ट्वा महाधनुः

विचकर्ष धनुःश्रेष्ठं वालिमुद्दिश्य लक्ष्यवत्

36: विस्फारस्तस्य धनुषो यन्त्रस्येव तदा बभौ

वितत्रास तदा वाली शरेणाभिहतो हृदि

37: स भिन्नमर्माभिहतो वक्त्राच्छोणितमुद्वमन्

ददर्शवस्थितं राममारात्सौमित्रिणा सह

38: गर्हयित्वा स काकुत्स्थं पपात भुवि मूर्छितः

तारा ददर्श तं भूमौ तारापतिमिव च्युतम्

34: sa mālayā tadā vīraḥ śuśubhe kaṇṭhasaktayā
śrīmāniva mahāśailo malayo meghamālayā

35: kṛtaciḥnam tu sugrīvaṃ rāmo dr̥ṣṭvā mahādhanuḥ
vicakarṣa dhanuḥśreṣṭhaṃ vālimuddiśya lakṣyavat

36: visphārastasya dhanuṣo yantrasyeva tadā babhau
vitatrāsa tadā vālī śareṇābhihato hṛdi

37: sa bhinnamarmābhihato vaktrācchoṇitamudvaman
dadarśāvasthitam rāmamārātsaumitriṇā saha

38: garhayitvā sa kākutsthaṃ papāta bhuvi mūrchitaḥ
tārā dadarśa taṃ bhūmau tārāpatimiva cyutam

Verse no. 34: With that garland around his neck, the brave Sugriv looked as radiant and handsome as Mount Malaya with a circle of clouds surrounding its summit.

Verse no. 35: Recognising Sugriv through that mark, the great archer Lord Ram drew his giant bow and chose Vaali as a target.

Verse no. 36: The twang of the bow was like the sound of the sound of thunder-clap. Pierced in the heart through the arrow, Vaali fell down¹.

Verse no. 37: With his heart pierced and wounded, he began to vomit blood through his mouth. He saw Lord Ram standing there, together with Laxman.

Verse no. 38: He rebuked Lord Ram (Kakutstha) sternly {for taking sides and killing him though he had no personal enmity with the Lord}², and fell down unconscious on the ground. Tara saw him on the ground, and Vaali, even in death, looked glorious as the moon, the lord of the stars, that has been dislodged from its abode in the sky and fallen on earth.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 9.]

39: हते वालिनि सुग्रीवः किष्किन्धां प्रत्यपद्यत
तां च तारापतिमुखीं तारां निपतितेश्वराम्
40: रामस्तु चतुरो मासान्पृष्ठे माल्यवतः शुभे
निवासमकरोद्धीमान्सुग्रीवेणाभ्युपस्थितः

39: hate vālini sugrīvaḥ kiṣkindhāṃ pratyapadyata
tām ca tārapatimukhīm tāraṃ nipatiteśvarām

40: rāmastu caturo māsānprṣṭhe mālyavataḥ śubhe
nivāsamakaroddhīmānsugrīveṇābhyupasthitaḥ

Verse no. 39: With Vaali slain and out of the way, Sugriv got back the throne of Kishkindha. Tara, who had a face as beautiful as the full moon, the lord of the stars, first grieved for her fallen husband, but then chose to accept Sugriv as her new lord.

{With her husband dead, and no one to take care of her in the new dispensation, Tara wisely chose not to antagonise Sugriv any further. So she accepted him as her new lord in order to avoid any unsavoury situation, such as being thrown in the prison and treated harshly like a slave.}

Verse no. 40: Honoured by Sugriv, who thanked Lord Ram for restoring the kingdom's throne to him, the Lord spent the next four months on the beautiful slopes of Mt. Malyavan¹ that was covered with greenery and was very pleasant as a habitat.

[Note--¹According to Ram Charit Manas, Lord Ram spent the four months of the rainy season on Mt. Prabarshan. Refer: Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 12.]

41: रावणोऽपि पुरीं गत्वा लङ्कां कामबलात्कृतः
सीतां निवेशयामास भवने नन्दनोपमे
अशोकवनिकाभ्याशे तापसाश्रमसंनिभे
42: भर्तृस्मरणतन्वङ्गी तापसीवेषधारिणी
उपवासतपःशीला तत्र सा पृथुलेक्षणा
उवास दुःखवसतीः फलमूलकृताशना

41: rāvaṇo'pi purīm gatvā laṅkāṃ kāmabalātkṛtaḥ
sītāṃ niveśayāmāsa bhavane nandanopame
aśokavanikābhyāśe tāpasāśramasaṃnibhe

42: bhartṛsmaraṇatanvaṅgī tāpasīveṣadhārīṇī
upavāsatapaḥśīlā tatra sā pṛthulekṣaṇā

uvāsa duḥkhavasatīḥ phalamūlakṛtāśanā

Verse no. 41: Having arrived at his city of Lanka, Ravana, being an evil demon, was overcome by the force of lust. He confined Sita in a house that was situated in the middle of a magnificent garden resembling the heavenly forest known as the Nandan Vana. In the immediate neighbourhood of this house which resembled a hermitage where ascetics live, was a rich grove of Ashoka Trees, and hence the area was known as 'Ashoka Van'. {The word 'Van' means a forest. This grove was large enough to be like a mini forest of Ashoka trees. The Ashoka tree is known as the Saraca Indica tree. It belongs to the botanical family 'Fabaceae', and is a leguminous plant. It is also called the 'sorrow-less tree' because of its soothing and calming effects.}

Verse no. 42: Sita lived there like an ascetic, wearing clothes suitable for an ascetic, and always focusing her mind on her beloved Lord Ram, her husband. Grieving and lamenting, she was so distressed and dismayed that she lost weight, becoming lean and wasted. She was devoted to fasting, penance and austerities. The large-eyed noble lady lived there in misery, surviving on fruits and roots.

43: दिदेश राक्षसीस्तत्र रक्षणे राक्षसाधिपः

प्रासासिशूलपरशुमुद्गरालातधारिणीः

44: द्व्यक्षीं त्र्यक्षीं ललाटाक्षीं दीर्घजिह्वामजिह्विकाम्

त्रिस्तनीमेकपादां च त्रिजटामेकलोचनाम्

45: एताश्चान्याश्च दीप्ताक्षयः करभोत्कटमूर्धजाः

परिवार्यासते सीतां दिवारात्रमतन्द्रिताः

43: dideśa rākṣasīstatra rakṣaṇe rākṣasādhipaḥ
prāsāsīśūlaparaśumudgarālātadhāriṇīḥ

44: dvyakṣīm tryakṣīm lalāṭākṣīm dīrghajihvāmajihvikām
tristanīmekapādām ca trijaṭāmekalocanām

45: etāścānyāśca dīptākṣyaḥ karabhotkaṭamūrdhajāḥ
parivāryāsate sītām divārātramatatandritāḥ

Verse no. 43: To guard her, Ravana, the lord of the demons, appointed fierce-looking female demons (i.e. demonesses). They held lances, swords, spears, axes, clubs, tridents and flaming weapons in their hands.

Verse no. 44: Some of them had two eyes, others had three eyes. Some had eyes on the forehead. Some had long tongues, others had no tongue. Some had three breasts and one leg. Others had three heads of matted hair and one eye. {The demonesses guarding Sita had fearful and gruesome forms so ugly and terrible that it would send chill down the spine of anyone who saw them.}

Verse no. 45: These and other hideous demonesses had fiery eyes. Their hair was as ugly as that of a young camel or the tail of a donkey. They surrounded Sita and kept a hawkish eye on her, watching her every moment of the day and night.

[Note--Sita had no privacy. More than the physical discomfort in which she lived in captivity, it was the constant sight of these disgusting, horrible and ugly ghouls every minute of the day and night that tormented her the most. Though the surrounding geographical area where she was incarcerated had a pleasant environment, full of green trees and flowers, but it mattered not to her, because before she could rest her tired eyes by glancing at the greenery around her, her eyes would first see these repulsive forms, and she would shiver in disgust and feel constrained to immediately shut her eyes in dismay.

This episode of ferocious demonesses being appointed by Ravana to torment Sita and make her fall in line is hinted at briefly in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 10.]

46: तास्तु तामायतापाङ्गीं पिशाच्यो दारुणस्वनाः

तर्जयन्ति सदा रौद्राः परुषव्यञ्जनाक्षराः

47: खादाम पाटयामैनां तिलशः प्रविभज्य ताम्

येयं भर्तारमस्माकमवमन्येह जीवति

48: इत्येवं परिभर्त्सन्तीस्त्रास्यमाना पुनः पुनः

भर्तृशोकसमाविष्टा निःश्वस्येदमुवाच ताः

49: आर्याः खादत मां शीघ्रं न मे लोभोऽस्ति जीविते

विना तं पुण्डरीकाक्षं नीलकुञ्चितमूर्धजम्

50: अप्येवाहं निराहारा जीवितप्रियवर्जिता

शोषयिष्यामि गात्राणि व्याली तालगता यथा

51: न त्वन्यमभिगच्छेयं पुमांसं राघवादृते

इति जानीत सत्यं मे क्रियतां यदनन्तरम्

46: tāstu tāmāyatāpāṅgīm piśācyo dāruṇasvanāḥ

tarjayanti sadā raudrāḥ paruṣavyañjanākṣarāḥ

47: khādāma pāṭayāmaināṃ tilāśaḥ pravibhajya tām

yeyaṃ bhartāramasmākamavamanyeha jīvati

48: ityevaṃ paribhartsantistrāsyamānā punaḥ punaḥ

bhartṛśokasamāviṣṭā niḥśvasyedadamuvāca tāḥ

49: āryāḥ khādata māṃ śīghraṃ na me lobho'sti jīvite

vinā taṃ puṇḍarīkākṣaṃ nīlakuñcitamūrdhajaṃ

50: apyevāhaṃ nirāhārā jīvitapriyavarjitā
śoṣaiṣyāmi gātrāṇi vyālī tālagatā yathā

51: na tvanyamabhigaccheyam pumāṃsam rāghavādr̥te
iti jānīta satyam me kriyatām yadanantaram

Verse no. 46: Those ferocious demonesses were gruesome to look at, and had terrible voices. They always scolded Sita, who had beautiful and calm eyes with black iris, in harsh words. {In the Indian context, eyes with black iris set against the surrounding area of a white conjunctiva are considered beautiful.}

Verse no. 47: These vampire-like demonesses growled at Sita, threatening to eat her. They would say: "Let us eat her. Let us tear her into shreds that are as small as sesamum. She lives here, but she disregards our lord Ravana. What a shame!"

Verse no. 48: Thus did they censure and terrify Sita repeatedly. Afflicted with grief for her husband, she would sigh and reply:

Verse no. 49: "Oh Aryas (noble ladies; āryāḥ)! Fulfil your desire and eat me up swiftly. I have no desire to be alive without the lotus-eyed one who has dark and curly hair (i.e. Lord Ram).

[Note--¹Sita's noble and kind heart never had rancour against anybody, even against her tormentors. This is markedly evident here when she addresses the demonesses who were constantly tormenting her with the polite word 'arya', meaning a noble lady, instead of some hateful word which might show her anger at them.]

Verse no. 50: Separated from my beloved, I would rather starve to death by abstaining from food so that my body disintegrates and frees my soul. I would prefer to let my body dry away much like a creeper does on a tall tree if it is uprooted from its soil. Or I would become as thin as a female serpent who shrinks her body so much that she is able to enter a small hole on the side of a tree.

Verse no. 51: I know no other person except my husband Raghava (Lord Ram), and therefore I will not go to any other man. Know this to be the truth. And do what you wish to do with me after that."

52: तस्यास्तद्वचनं श्रुत्वा राक्षस्यस्ताः खरस्वनाः

आख्यातुं राक्षसेन्द्राय जग्मुस्तत्सर्वमादितः

53: गतासु तासु सर्वासु त्रिजटा नाम राक्षसी

सान्त्वयामास वैदेहीं धर्मज्ञा प्रियवादिनी

52: tasyāstadvacanam śrutvā rākṣasyastāḥ kharasvanāḥ
ākhyātum rākṣasendrāya jagmustatsarvamāditāḥ

53: gatāsu tāsu sarvāsu trijaṭā nāma rākṣasī
sāntvayāmāsa vaidehīm dharmajñā priyavādinī

Verse no. 52: On hearing these words of Sita, the evil demonesses, whose voices were harsh, went and reported everything to their lord, Ravana, the king of the demons. {They briefed Ravana about what had transpired, about Sita's determination of not abandoning her loyalty to her husband, Lord Ram, and under no circumstance even think of looking at another man, including Ravana. They told Ravana that they had tried to threaten her and employed all tricks they could think of in order to frighten her to surrender herself to him, but she had bluntly rebuffed them.}

Verse no. 53: When all of them had left, a polite and kind-hearted old demoness named Trijata, who was learned about dharma and pleasant in speech, comforted the virtuous Vaidehi (Sita) with soothing words.

[Note--This episode of Trijata meeting and comforting Sita has been narrated in different way in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11--to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12. Here it is said that it was Trijata who had warned the demonesses that they should stop tormenting Sita and be friendly to her as she has had a dream in which a monkey (Hanuman) had arrived as a messenger of Lord Ram, had burnt Lanka, and in due course of time a huge army had invaded the city and defeated Ravana, and Vibhishan had been crowned as the new king of Lanka. So therefore, it would be wise for them not to be on the wrong side with Sita.]

54: सीते वक्ष्यामि ते किञ्चिद्विश्वासं कुरु मे सखि

भयं ते व्येतु वामोरु शृणु चेदं वचो मम

55: अविन्ध्यो नाम मेधावी वृद्धो राक्षसपुंगवः

स रामस्य हितान्वेषी त्वदर्थे हि स मावदत्

56: सीता मद्वचनाद्वाच्या समाश्वस्य प्रसाद्य च

भर्ता ते कुशली रामो लक्ष्मणानुगतो बली

57: सख्यं वानरराजेन शक्रप्रतिमतेजसा

कृतवान्नाघवः श्रीमांस्त्वदर्थे च समुद्यतः

54: sīte vakṣyāmi te kiṃcidviśvāsaṃ kuru me sakhi

bhayaṃ te vyetu vāmoru śṛṇu cedam vaco mama

55: avindhyo nāma medhāvī vṛddho rākṣasapuṅgavaḥ

sa rāmasya hitānveṣī tvadarthe hi sa māvadat

56: sītā madvacanādvācyā samāśvāsya prasādyā ca

bhartā te kuśalī rāmo lakṣmaṇānugato balī

57: sakhyaṃ vānaraājena śakrapratimatejasā

kṛtavānrāghavaḥ śrīmāṃstvadathe ca samudyataḥ

Verse no. 54: "Oh Sita! I will tell you something. Oh friend! Have trust in me. Give up your fear. Oh the one with slender waist! Listen to my words.

Verse no. 55: There is an elderly, intelligent and righteous demon here, and his name is Avindhya. With Lord Ram's welfare in mind, and for your sake, he has told me this:

Verse no. 56: 'Go and convey my message to Sita and comfort her. Tell her that both her husband Ram, and the powerful Laxman who is always by his side, are well and safe.

Verse no. 57: For your sake, the illustrious Raghava (Lord Ram) has become friends with the king of the monkeys (i.e. Sugriv) who is like Shakra (Indra, the king of the gods) in his energy. The Lord has forged this alliance to rescue you from the clutches of Ravana. {Lord Ram has befriended Sugriv for your sake as the Lord needs a powerful army to defeat the demons. Do not worry, for sooner rather than later your deliverance will come to you.}

58: मा च तेऽस्तु भयं भीरु रावणाल्लोकगर्हितात्

नलकूबरशापेन रक्षिता ह्यस्यनिन्दिते

59: शप्तो ह्येष पुरा पापो वधूं रम्भां परामृशन्

न शक्तो विवशां नारीमुपैतुमजितेन्द्रियः

60: क्षिप्रमेष्यति ते भर्ता सुग्रीवेणाभिरक्षितः

सौमित्रिसहितो धीमांस्त्वां चेतो मोक्षयिष्यति

58: mā ca te'stu bhayaṃ bhīru rāvaṇāllokagarhitāt
nalakūbaraśāpena rakṣitā hyasyanindite

59: śapto hyeṣa purā pāpo vadhūṃ rambhāṃ parāmrśan
na śakto vivaśāṃ nārīmupaitumajitendriyaḥ

60: kṣiprameṣyati te bhartā sugrīveṇābhirakṣitaḥ
saumitrisahito dhīmāṃstvāṃ ceto mokṣayiṣyati

Verse no. 58: My dear, why do you feel so timid and terrified of Ravana; be rest assured that he cannot harm you. Do you know why I make this assertion? Well, Ravana is censured by the world and is under a severe curse cast upon him by Nala-kuber which ensures that you are protected from his misadventures and lust directed at you that would violate your integrity, modesty and chastity. So therefore, you shall ever remain unblemished and untainted no matter what happens, for Ravana would dare not touch you due to Nala-kuber's curse on him¹.

[Note—¹Nala-kuber had once cursed Ravana that if he ever tries to force himself upon a woman against her wish and one who does not like him, then his head would split into seven pieces. This curse was cast by Nala-kuber when his uncle Ravana had once sexually assaulted and tried to force himself upon the former's first wife known as Rambha. Nala-kuber was the son of Kuber, the treasurer of heaven.]

Verse no. 59: In earlier times, the sinful fellow (i.e. Ravana) was cursed when he tried to impose himself on Rambha and force her to become his consort against her wish.

This evil fellow has no control of his senses, but remember that due to the curse cast upon him, he is simply incapable of forcibly violating any woman.

Verse no. 60: Along with Sugriv (the king of the monkeys and the ruler of Kishkindha), and with Laxman (Soumitri) by his side, your wise husband (Lord Ram) will swiftly arrive here and set you free. {It's only a matter of time, but it is sure to happen. Hence, you must show courage and resilience in order to tide over this difficult phase in your life. But have faith that the end would be good.}

61: स्वप्ना हि सुमहाघोरा दृष्टा मेऽनिष्टदर्शनाः

विनाशायस्य दुर्बुद्धेः पौलस्त्यकुलघातिनः

62: दारुणो ह्येष दुष्टात्मा क्षुद्रकर्मा निशाचरः

स्वभावाच्छीलदोषेण सर्वेषां भयवर्धनः

63: स्पर्धते सर्वदेवैर्यः कालोपहतचेतनः

मया विनाशलिङ्गानि स्वप्ने दृष्टानि तस्य वै

64: तैलाभिषिक्तो विकचो मज्जन्पङ्के दशाननः

असकृत्खरयुक्ते तु रथे नृत्यन्निव स्थितः

61: svapnā hi sumahāghorā dr̥ṣṭā me'niṣṭadarśanāḥ
vināśāyāsya durbuddheḥ paulastyakulaghātinaḥ

62: dāruṇo hyeṣa duṣṭātmā kṣudrakarmā niśācaraḥ
svabhāvācchīladoṣeṇa sarveṣāṃ bhayavardhanaḥ

63: spardhate sarvadevairyaḥ kālopahatacetanāḥ
mayā vināśalingāni svapne dr̥ṣṭāni tasya vai

64: tailābhiṣikto vikaco majjanpanke daśānanaḥ
asakṛtkharayukte tu rathe nṛtyanniva sthitaḥ

{In the verses that follow herein below, Trijata tells Sita about the dream she has had which predicted a horrible end of Ravana and Kumbhakaraṇ, his brother, along with the destruction of their army and the city of Lanka. She saw further in the same dream that Vibhishan, Ravana's brother who had aligned himself with Lord Ram after Ravana insulted him in public view in his court, was garlanded and made the next king of Lanka.}

Verse no. 61: I have had an extremely terrible dream, signifying terrible calamity and the destruction of the evil-minded one (i.e. Ravana) who has so unfortunately demolished the reputation and respect that the lineage of Pulastya had been enjoying till this notorious fellow took over. {This evil fellow will go down in history as the one who was responsible for the ruin of the demon race.}

Verse no. 62: That evil-souled 'roamer of the night' (niśācaraḥ) is the performer of mean and terrible deeds. Because of his wicked nature and the taint of cruelty that he

has acquired, he has become a thorn for all living beings, inflicting horror and fear in everyone.

Verse no. 63: Having lost his senses because of destiny, he even challenges all the gods; he has gone out of control and lost his bearings. In my dream, I have seen all the portents of his destruction.

Verse no. 64: I will give you an example of his ruin which I saw in the dream. Smeared in oil and with his head shaven, the ten headed Ravana, called 'Dashanana', was immersed in mud (which got stuck on his oil-smeared body, forming a thick crust). He was stationed on a chariot drawn by donkeys as he danced madly. {To wit, with oil smeared all over his body, he rolled over in mud that got stuck on his body due to the oil. With a shaven head and dancing madly on the chariot drawn by donkeys, he looked forsaken and presented a horrible sight as someone who is in the last throes of death.}

65: कुम्भकर्णादयश्चेमे नग्नाः पतितमूर्धजाः
 कृष्यन्ते दक्षिणामाशां रक्तमाल्यानुलेपनाः
 66: श्वेतातपत्रः सोष्णीषः शुक्लमाल्यविभूषणः
 श्वेतपर्वतमारुढ एक एव विभीषणः
 67: सचिवाश्चास्य चत्वारः शुक्लमाल्यानुलेपनाः
 श्वेतपर्वतमारुढा मोक्षयन्तेऽस्मान्महाभयात्

65: kumbhakarṇādayaśceme nagnāḥ patitamūrdhajāḥ
 kṛṣyante dakṣiṇāmāśāṃ raktamālyānulepanāḥ

66: śvetātapatraḥ soṣṇīṣaḥ śuklamālyavibhūṣaṇaḥ
 śvetaparvatamārūḍha eka eva vibhīṣaṇaḥ

67: sacivāścāśya catvāraḥ śuklamālyānulepanāḥ
 śvetaparvatamārūḍhā mokṣyante'smānmahābhayāt

Verse no. 65: I have seen Kumbhakarna and others naked, with disheveled hair and bowed heads, being dragged southwards. Their bodies were covered with a thick plaster consisting of mud and blood. {The 'southern direction' is indicative of hell, as opposed to the 'northern direction' that symbolises heaven.}

Verse no. 66: I have seen Vibhishan alone climbing up Mount Shveta¹, decorated with white garlands and ointments, as he was crowned a king. He had a white ceremonial umbrella over his head to represent his stature as a sovereign of the demon kingdom of Lanka.

[Note--¹The fort of Lanka had a high citadel at its central point where the demon king had his palace and court. Vibhishan was obviously referring to it because the royal throne was located here.]

Verse no. 67: He and his four chief advisers or ministers (*sacivāścāsyā catvāraḥ*)¹, bedecked with white garlands and ointments, also climbed Mount Shveta. They were all freed from the danger they had faced from Ravana.

[Note--¹Who were these four chief advisors or ministers of Vibhishan? They are the following: (i) Malyawant (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow Doha no. 39), (ii) Avindhya (refer: canto 264, verse nos. 55-60, and canto 273, verse nos. 28-30 of Mahabharat, Ramopakhyān which we are reading at present); (iii) Prahast (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 8); and (iv) Sushen (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 55 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it).

(i) Malyawant was Ravana's, and by extension Vibhishan's too, maternal grandfather; he had tried his best to make Ravana understand he was on the wrong path, but the demon king rebuked him.

(ii) Avindhya was an elderly demon who was one of the few who tried to dissuade Ravana from harming Sita and make peace with Lord Ram. He had sent Trijata to comfort Sita and reassure her that she would soon be reunited with her husband, Lord Ram.

(iii) Prahast was another demon who was similarly rebuked by Ravana when he attempted to advise the latter to discard his hostility towards Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 8--to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 10).

(iv) Sushen was the medicine man of Lanka; he was instrumental in Laxman's revival in the battle-field after the latter was wounded by Meghanad, the son of Ravana. He too was in favour of Vibhishan.]

68: रामस्यास्त्रेण पृथिवी परिक्षिप्ता ससागरा

यशसा पृथिवीं कृत्स्नां पूरयिष्यति ते पतिः

69: अस्थिसंचयमारूढो भुञ्जानो मधुपायसम्

लक्ष्मणश्च मया दृष्टो निरीक्षन्सर्वतो दिशः

70: रुदती रुधिरार्द्राङ्गी व्याघ्रेण परिरक्षिता

असकृत्त्वं मया दृष्टा गच्छन्ती दिशमुत्तराम्

71: हर्षमेष्यसि वैदेहि क्षिप्रं भर्तृसमन्विता

राघवेण सह भ्रात्रा सीते त्वमचिरादिव

68: rāmasyāstreṇa pṛthivī parikṣiptā sasāgarā

yaśasā pṛthivīm kṛtsnām pūrayiṣyati te patiḥ

69: asthisamçayamārūḍho bhuñjāno madhupāyasam

lakṣmaṇaśca mayā dṛṣṭo nirīkṣansarvato diśaḥ

70: rudatī rudhirārdrāṅgī vyāghreṇa parirakṣitā

asakṛttvaṃ mayā dṛṣṭā gacchantī diśamuttarām

71: harṣameṣyasi vaidehi kṣipraṃ bharṭṣamanvitā
rāghaveṇa saha bhrātrā site tvamacirādiva

Verse no. 68: The glory and fame of your husband, Lord Ram, will spread to all the corners of the earth, covering all the oceans and the land beyond.

Verse no. 69: I have seen Laxman enjoying a porridge of sweet rice and honey as he stood over a huge mound of bones to take stock of the situation by looking in every direction as he surveyed the battle-field. {Laxman needed a high point to survey the surroundings, and the only option available in the battle-field was bones of dead warriors.}

Verse no. 70: I have seen you protected by a tiger as you wept and walked towards the northern direction¹. Your body was covered in blood².

[Note--¹The 'northern direction' is indicative of the Indian mainland situated on the north of the island of Lanka. Trijata meant that after being freed, Sita accompanied her husband Lord Ram, and his younger brother Laxman as they went back to the mainland from where she was abducted by Ravana, and this land was situated in the the northern direction from Lanka.

²What is meant here is that so much blood was shed during the war that it filled the air in the form of small droplets much like water molecules fill the atmosphere during the monsoon season; these water molecules then fall in the form of a drizzle that soaks everyone around.

Another connotation is that no time was wasted after victory of Lord Ram, and everyone left Lanka soon thereafter, even before the blood could dry up in the battle-field of Lanka. Vibhishan had invited Lord Ram to preside over his coronation as the king of Lanka, but the Lord told him that he must return immediately to Ayodhya as time was running out for the end of his fourteen years of exile, and if even a day elapsed more than the designated time, he doubts if his dear younger brother Bharat would be found alive. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116-c along with Chauapi line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 71: Oh Vaidehi (Sita)! You will soon be reunited with your husband Raghava and his brother (Laxman). You will soon find joy and happiness unbound before you. That time is not far away.

72: इति सा मृगशावाक्षी तच्छ्रुत्वा त्रिजटावचः

बभूवाशावती बाला पुनर्भर्तृसमागमे

73: यावदभ्यागता रौद्राः पिशाच्यस्ताः सुदारुणाः

ददृशुस्तां त्रिजटया सहासीनां यथा पुरा

72: iti sā mrgaśāvākṣī tacchrutvā trijaṭāvacah
babhūvāśāvātī bālā punarbharṭṣamāgame

73: yāvadabhyāgatā raudrāḥ piśācyastāḥ sudāruṇāḥ
dadṛśustām trijaṭayā sahāsinām yathā purā

Verse no. 72: When the doe-eyed Sita heard these comforting words of Trijata, she became hopeful of being reunited with her husband (Lord Ram) once again.

Verse no. 73: Meanwhile, the cruel and dreadful female demon guards (raudrāḥ piśācyastāḥ), who had gone to report the developments to Ravana a little while ago¹, returned, and they saw Trijata sitting with Sita.

[Note--¹Refer: verse no. 52 herein above.]

Thus ends Canto 264.

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Canto 265:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततस्तां भर्तृशोकार्ता दीनां मलिनवाससम्
मणिशेषाभ्यलंकारां रुदतीं च पतिव्रताम्

2: राक्षसीभिरुपास्यन्तीं समासीनां शिलातले
रावणः कामबाणार्तो ददर्शोपससर्प च

3: देवदानवगन्धर्वयक्षकिंपुरुषैर्युधि
अजितोऽशोकवनिकां ययौ कन्दर्पमोहितः

4: दिव्याम्बरधरः श्रीमान्सुमृष्टमणिकुण्डलः
विचित्रमाल्यमुकुटो वसन्त इव मूर्तिमान्

5: स कल्पवृक्षसदृशो यत्नादपि विभूषितः
श्मशानचैत्यद्रुमवद्भूषितोऽपि भयंकरः

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tatastām bhartr̥śokārtām dīnām malinavāsasam
maṇiśeṣābhyalaṃkāṛām rudatīm ca pativratām

2: rākṣasībhirupāsyantīm samāsinām śilātale
rāvaṇaḥ kāmabāṇārto dadarśopasasarpa ca

3: devadānavagandharvayakṣakimpuruṣair Yudhi
ajito'śokavanikām yayau kandarpamohitaḥ

4: divyāambaradharaḥ śrīmānsumṛṣṭamaṇikuṇḍalaḥ
vicitramālyamukūṭo vasaṇta iva mūrtimān

5: sa kalpavr̥kṣasadṛśo yatnādapi vibhūṣitaḥ
śmaśānacaityadrumavadbhūṣito'pi bhayaṃkaraḥ

{After the female demon guards went to report to Ravana about Sita's determination not to surrender before him, and remain faithful and loyal to her husband Lord Ram, Ravana was very upset with this rejection of him by Sita. His ego was stoked and self-respect was trampled; he decided to make another attempt to tempt Sita with a show of his majesty and charm, emphasising that a woman feels flattered when he courts her. Usually it is the other way round--beautiful damsels, even ladies of the heavenly courts, feel honoured to find themselves in his company, and if he himself comes to beg for Sita's hands then she ought to feel privileged and grateful to him, instead of being so rude as to spurn his overtures of love and attraction for her. With this lustful thought in mind, and bitten by the passion-bug, Ravana once again went to Sita to show-off his majesty, greatness, charm, splendour and resources, and point out to her how damsels seek him out, and how his harem is full of the most voluptuous beauties in this world. He told Sita that if she agrees to his proposal for a romantic alliance leading to a conjugal relationship with him, he surely would make her his chief queen!

Sita was shocked at his boldness, madness, and disgusting proposal, which obviously she rebuffed outright, which in turn infuriated Ravana and set fire to his fuse of impatience.}

Verse no. 1: Sage Markandey continued with his narration. He said:

"Sita was sorrowful, distraught and feeling extremely miserable on account of her separation from her husband, Lord Ram. She was grieving, and attired in soiled garments and what remained of her gems and ornaments. She was very devoted to her husband, and wept incessantly.

Verse no. 2: She was seated on a slab of stone and was served by the demonesses. rakshasis. Meanwhile, the demon king Ravana was so obsessed with her that he could not resist his urges and came to meet her in the royal forest where he had kept her captive.

Verse no. 3: The demon king who was so invincible that none of the mighty gods, danavas, gandharvas, yakshas and kimpurushas had been able to vanquish him, had at last been defeated by the patron god of lust and passion, known as Kandarpa, so much so that the latter instigated Ravana to go and meet Sita in the grove of the Ahoka trees to tempt her once again.

Verse no. 4: Ravana looked radiant and sumptuous in his resplendent attire that resembled the celestial garments worn by great gods and gandharvas of heaven. He had shining earrings that were richly endowed with priceless gems. He wore colourful garlands and a royal crown to complete the picture of glamour and royalty. Verily, he looked like a personification of the spring season. {The spring season is regarded as the best amongst all the seasons; the earth looks vibrant, and is covered with new sprouts of life and greenery. Spring is a season of cheer after the solemn months of winter, and before the onset of wet rainy season when everything becomes damp and sodden.}

Verse no. 5: Having adorned himself carefully, he looked very alluring and attractive like the evergreen Kalpa Tree. But inspite of his showy makeup, his inherent evil nature and demonic manners reflected in his demeanours. He looked so out of place that his physical presence near Sita reminded one of a fig tree, also known as the chaitya tree, that might grow in a cremation ground (*śmaśānacaityadruma*). {The chaitya tree is also called the 'funeral tree' as it is said to be abode of gods who can grant deliverance to the soul of a dead person during his funeral in the cremation ground. Here it means that though Ravana adorned himself in royal attire suitable for gods of heaven, but his primary evil nature could not be concealed behind this facade just like the case of a fig tree, which independently is regarded as holy and auspicious, but becomes ominous and symbolic of death when it grows in a cremation ground as 'spirits' are believed to live on it waiting for their turn for deliverance.}

6: स तस्यास्तनुमध्यायाः समीपे रजनीचरः

ददृशे रोहिणीमेत्य शनैश्चर इव ग्रहः

7: स तामामन्त्र्य सुश्रोणीं पुष्पकेतुशराहतः

इदमित्यब्रवीद्बालां त्रस्तां रौहीमिवाबलाम्

6: sa tasyāstanumadhyāyāḥ samīpe rajanīcaraḥ
dadṛśe rohiṇīmetya śanaiścara iva grahaḥ

7: sa tāmāmantrya suśroṇīm puṣpaketuśarāhataḥ
idamityabravīdbālāṃ trastāṃ rauhīmivābalām

Verse no. 6: The demon king, known as a ' *rajanīcaraḥ*' (someone who prefers to stalk his victim in the darkness of the night), approached the slender-waisted one (i.e. Sita), and looked like the planet Saturn approaching Rohini¹.

[Note--¹Rohini is a constellation of which Moon is the presiding deity--i.e. Rohini is ruled by the Moon. Rohini is regarded as a symbol of luxury, beauty and wealth, while the Moon is also closely associated with beauty and love. Poets usually compare a beautiful woman's face with that of the Moon. Saturn is regarded as an evil planet, causing more disruption and evil than doing any good.

In astrological terms, if Saturn interferes with Rohini, then marriages are rocked and disharmony sets in. Saturn's presence is symbolic of difficulties, coldness and disharmony.

This metaphor of the Saturn approaching Rohini is cited here to imply that Ravana tried to create rift between Lord Ram's and Sita's affection for each other and ruin their marriage.]

Verse no. 7: Having greeted Sita, the one with the beautiful hips, and struck by the arrows of the one who has the flower as a banner (i.e. Kamdeo, the patron god of love and passion; Cupid), he spoke apparently polite words meant to tempt Sita-- who became terrified like a trapped doe as soon as she saw Ravana approaching her-- to accept his proposal for an alliance.

- 8: सीते पर्याप्तमेतावत्कृतो भर्तुरनुग्रहः
 प्रसादं कुरु तन्वङ्गि क्रियतां परिकर्म ते
- 9: भजस्व मां वरारोहे महार्हाभरणाम्बरा
 भव मे सर्वनारीणामुत्तमा वरवर्णिनि
- 10: सन्ति मे देवकन्याश्च राजर्षीणां तथाङ्गनाः
 सन्ति दानवकन्याश्च दैत्यानां चापि योषितः
- 11: चतुर्दश पिशाचानां कोट्यो मे वचने स्थिताः
 दिवस्तावत्पुरुषादानां रक्षसां भीमकर्मणाम्
- 12: ततो मे त्रिगुणा यक्षा ये मद्वचनकारिणः
 केचिदेव धनाध्यक्षं भ्रातरं मे समाश्रिताः
- 13: गन्धर्वाप्सरसो भद्रे मामापानगतं सदा
 उपतिष्ठन्ति वामोरु यथैव भ्रातरं मम
- 14: पुत्रोऽहमपि विप्रर्षेः साक्षाद्विश्रवसो मुनेः
 पञ्चमो लोकपालानामिति मे प्रथितं यशः
- 15: दिव्यानि भक्ष्यभोज्यानि पानानि विविधानि च
 यथैव त्रिदशेशस्य तथैव मम भामिनि
- 16: क्षीयतां दुष्कृतं कर्म वनवासकृतं तव
 भार्या मे भव सुश्रोणि यथा मन्दोदरी तथा

8: site paryāptametāvatkr̥to bharturanugrahaḥ
 prasādaṁ kuru tanvaṅgi kriyatāṁ parikarma te

9: bhajasva māṁ varārohe mahārḥābharaṇāmbarā
 bhava me sarvanārīṇāmuttamā varavarṇini

10: santi me devakanyāśca rājarṣīṇāṁ tathāṅganāḥ
 santi dānavakanyāśca daityānāṁ cāpi yoṣitaḥ

11: caturdaśa piśācānāṁ koṭyo me vacane sthitāḥ
 divistāvatpuruṣādānāṁ rakṣasāṁ bhīmakarmaṇāṁ

12: tato me triguṇā yakṣā ye madvacanakāriṇaḥ
 kecideva dhanādhyakṣaṁ bhrātaraṁ me samāśritāḥ

13: gandharvāpsaraso bhadre māmāpānagataṁ sadā
 upatiṣṭhanti vāmoru yathaiva bhrātaraṁ mama

14: putro'hamapi viprarṣeḥ sāḁśādvīśravasō muneḥ
 pañcamo lokapālānāmiti me prathitaṁ yaśaḥ

15: divyāni bhakṣyabhojyāni pānāni vividhāni ca
yathaiva tridaśeśasya tathaiva mama bhāmini

16: kṣīyatām duṣkṛtaṁ karma vanavāsakṛtaṁ tava
bhāryā me bhava suśroṇi yathā mandodarī tathā

Verse no. 8: Ravana assumed a demeanour of a love-smitten courting knight who was hell-bent to impress a princess with whom he was infatuated.

He told Sita: "Oh Sita! You have shown favours towards your husband for a long time. Oh the one who is slender in form! I beseech you that now is the time for you to show me the same favours. You will not regret your decision, for you would be liberally shown counter favours by me, and I shall adorn you with all the royal regalia that you deserve but which your misfortune has robbed from you.

Verse no. 9: Oh fair-complexioned lady! Adorn yourself with magnificent garments and ornaments, and accept my proposal. You shall be foremost of all the women who are with me.

Verse no. 10: I have daughters of the gods, women of great sages, and wives of great demons (danavas and daityas), who are rulers of the underworld, under my command.

Verse no. 11: Fourteen crore (10 million) pishachas (flesh eating vampires) await my command, and double that number of rakshasas (male demons), the eaters of men and the performers of terrible deeds, are standing ready to serve me and follow my orders.

Verse no. 12: Three times that number of Yakshas¹ carry out my instructions. Some of these Yakshas have my permission to serve my elder brother Kuber², the lord of riches.

[Note--¹ The 'Yaksha' is a spirit or a demi-god with a dual role--it is both benevolent as well as malevolent, but more often than not they are benign in nature unless provoked. The Yaksha therefore represent the duality of Nature--good and bad co-existing. They reside on trees, mountains and forests, as well as near treasure troves buried underground or under tree roots to guard the wealth. In this latter role, they are regarded as attendants of Kuber, the god of wealth, and a protector of wealth. Towards those who offer worship to them, the Yakshas grant boons, while they become dangerous for those with whom they feel threatened, even going to the extent of killing them or cursing them with a calamity. Kuber is the lord of Yakshas--refer: canto 258, verse no. 17.

²Kuber was an elder brother of Ravana. He is the patron god of wealth and a treasurer of heaven.]

Verse no. 13: Oh fortunate one! When I am in my drinking hall, gandharvas (celestial beings who are heavenly musicians) and apsaras (heavenly damsels) always attend on me here on earth as they attend on my brother Kuber in heaven.

Verse no. 14: I am the son of the great sage Vishrava, a direct descendant of the creator Brahma. My fame as the fifth guardian of the world is well known.

I am the son of the sage Viśravas, born of Brahmā himself. My fame as being the fifth protector of the world (pañcamo lokapāl) is well established.

Verse no. 15: I eat delicious food, possess all known wealth in this world, and I have many different kinds of drinks that are partaken by the greatest of gods. Oh beautiful one! Whatever the gods have, I possess every one of those things.

Verse no. 16: Let all the sufferings inflicted on you due to your exile in the forest be gone forthwith. I beseech you, I implore you to be my wife like Mandodari is (and you shall reap all the benefits of being the favoured queen of a great king who has the entire world under his command)."

[Note--What has been said here by Ravana to Sita finds a brief mention in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 9.]

17: इत्युक्ता तेन वैदेही परिवृत्य शुभानना

तृणमन्तरतः कृत्वा तमुवाच निशाचरम्

18: अशिवेनातिवामोरुरजसं नेत्रवारिणा

स्तनावपतितौ बाला सहितावभिवर्षती

उवाच वाक्यं तं क्षुद्रं वैदेही पतिदेवता

17: ityuktā tena vaidehī parivṛtya śubhānanā
trṇamantarataḥ kṛtvā tamuvāca niśācaram

18: aśivenātivāmorūrajasraṃ netravāriṇā
stanāvapatitau bālā sahitāvabhivarṣatī
uvāca vākyaṃ taṃ kṣudraṃ vaidehī patidevatā

Verse no. 17: Thus addressed, the noble Vaidehi (Sita) felt very disgusted. She turned her face away from the demon, and held a blade of grass as a symbolic barrier between herself and her tormentor¹. Sternly rebuking Ravana, she strongly protested.

[Note--¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 9.

Sita holding a humble 'blade of grass' to act as a unpenetrable shield before her was a mighty challenge to Ravana who had been boasting of his unchallenged might and power. Sita literally dared him to step forward and touch this shield which was nothing but a simple blade of grass if he has a fraction of the gut and the dare-devilry he is boasting of so much. Sita had immense strength of the spirit and a soul that had the power of steel that comes with truth, holiness, commitment to honesty and loyalty, and the austerity and penance which she had been so rigidly observing throughout. As it turned out, Ravana did not dare to step forward; he had no courage to snatch this blade of grass and touch Sita, because he knew very well that if he did commit this

mistake then he will be scorched and flung back in front of all his demons and demonesses who were watching the proceedings. What a shame would it be then for him! Ravana was not a fool; he was very wise--he knew when to hold back and when to strike. It is such an irony that a mighty demon as Ravana did not, or could not, gather enough courage to even touch this shield represented by a humble blade of grass, what to talk of touching Sita and violating her modesty!]

Verse no. 18: With tears running down from her eyes, body trembling and her chest heaving as she breathed heavily both in anger and disgust, the devoted and chaste wife of Lord Ram (i.e. Sita) spoke the following words to the vile demon king (Ravana) as narrated in the following verses--:

19: सकृद्वदतो वाक्यमीदृशं राक्षसेश्वर
विषादयुक्तमेतत्ते मया श्रुतमभाग्यया
20: तद्भद्रसुख भद्रं ते मानसं विनिवर्त्यताम्
परदारास्म्यलभ्या च सततं च पतिव्रता
21: न चैवोपयिकी भार्या मानुषी कृपणा तव
विवशां धर्षयित्वा च कां त्वं प्रीतिमवाप्स्यसि
22: प्रजापतिसमो विप्रो ब्रह्मयोनिः पिता तव
न च पालयसे धर्मं लोकपालसमः कथम्
23: भ्रातरं राजराजानं महेश्वरसखं प्रभुम्
धनेश्वरं व्यपदिशन्कथं त्विह न लज्जसे

19: sakṛdvadato vākyamīdṛśaṃ rākṣaseśvara
viṣādayuktametatte mayā śrutamabhāgyayā

20: tadbhadrasukha bhadraṃ te mānasaṃ vinivartyatām
paradārāsmyalabhyā ca satataṃ ca pativratā

21: na caivopayikī bhāryā mānuṣī kṛpṇā tava
vivaśāṃ dharṣayitvā ca kām tvaṃ prītimavāpsyasi

22: prajāpatisamo vipro brahmayoniḥ pitā tava
na ca pālayase dharmāṃ lokapālasamaḥ katham

23: bhrātaraṃ rājarājānaṃ maheśvarasakhaṃ prabhum
dhaneśvaraṃ vyapadiśankathaṃ tviha na lajjase

Verse no. 19: Sita replied: "Oh lord of the rakshasas! I am unfortunate that I have had to listen to such deplorable words from you. I am miserable and unlucky that I have heard such harsh words from you and still remain alive. Pity on me!

Verse no. 20: Let prosperity and well-being be yours! Be contented and remain happy with whatever pleasures and comforts you possess, but you will do good to yourself

by turning these evil and nasty thoughts away from you. Remember that I am another man's wife, and I am always devoted to my husband.

Verse no. 21: This helpless woman cannot be a wife for you in any measure whatsoever. What pleasure and goodwill will you find by violating a helpless woman? Perish the thought.

Verse no. 22: Your father is a Brahmin; he has Brahma as his father, and as such your father occupies an exalted stature that is equivalent to a Prajapati, the lord and protector of creation. You have yourself admitted that you occupy a position as being the fifth Prajapati (refer verse no. 14 herein above). Well, think over the matter and live up to your noble pedigree; you ought to follow the principles of good conduct and nobility of thought that are hallmarks of Dharma. If you are the equal of a guardian of the world, how and why do you not follow Dharma?

Verse no. 23: Do you not have any shame by calling Kuber, the lord of riches and the king of the yakshas, and who is also a friend of the lord Maheshvara (Shiva), as your brother? {Do you not feel ashamed of yourself that with someone as great as Kuber being your brother, Vishrava being your father, and Brahma being your grandfather, you have stooped so low as to eye a loyal wife of another person, and try to impose your self on her against her wishes? What more despicable and deplorable conduct can anything else be?}"

24: इत्युक्त्वा प्रारुदत्सीता कम्पयन्ती पयोधरौ

शिरोधरां च तन्वङ्गी मुखं प्रच्छाद्य वाससा

25: तस्या रुदत्या भामिन्या दीर्घा वेणी सुसंयता

ददृशे स्वसिता स्निग्धा काली व्यालीव मूर्धनि

24: ityuktvā prārudatsitā kampayantī payodharau
śirodharāṃ ca tanvaṅgī mukhaṃ pracchādya vāsasā

25: tasyā rudatyā bhāminyā dīrghā veṇī susaṃyatā
dadṛśe svasitā snigdhā kālī vyālīva mūrdhani

Verse no. 24: Having said this, Sita's bosoms shook as she trembled and wept inconsolably. The one who had become very thin in grief (i.e. Sita) then covered her face and head with the end of her garments as she wept inconsolably.

Verse no. 25: Her hair, which was black, shiny, long and well-braided, adorned her head like the coil of a huge serpent as Sita bent her head in abject despair and sorrow while weeping most indignantlly.

26: तच्छ्रुत्वा रावणो वाक्यं सीतयोक्तं सुनिष्ठुरम्

प्रत्याख्यातोऽपि दुर्मेधाः पुनरेवाब्रवीद्वचः

27: काममङ्गानि मे सीते दूनोतु मकरध्वजः

न त्वामकामां सुश्रोणीं समेष्ये चारुहासिनीम्

28: किं नु शक्यं मया कर्तुं यत्त्वमद्यापि मानुषम्

आहारभूतमस्माकं राममेवानुरुध्यसे

26: tacchrutvā rāvaṇo vākyam sītayoktam suniṣṭhuraṃ
pratyākhyāto'pi durmedhāḥ punarevābravīdvacaḥ

27: kāmamaṅgāni me sīte dūnotu makaradhvajah
na tvāmakāmāṃ suśroṇīm sameṣye cāruhāsinīm

28: kiṃ nu śakyaṃ mayā kartuṃ yattvamadyāpi mānuṣam
āhārabhūtamasmākaṃ rāmamevānurudhyase

Verse no. 26: On hearing Sita's resolute words of rejection, Ravana, whose corrupted wisdom could not gauge the density and gravity of the situation as well as the finality of Sita's determination of rejecting him, however chose to try once again.

Though smitten by desire, Ravana pretended to be modest as he once again spoke with Sita, but politely this time, in order to calm her down with the hope that she will soon re-think and become mellowed enough to accept his proposals. With this thought in mind, he said--

Verse no. 27: "Oh Sita! Let the god of passions, who has a makara (crocodile) as an emblem on his banner (i.e. Kamdeo), burn me as much as he wants, but I shall not violate you and force my wishes upon you.

Verse no. 28: But nevertheless, think for yourself and weigh the pros and cons of the prevailing situation. I will not impose my wishes on you, but ponder of the matter and see what good purpose you would serve by clinging on a human being who is a mere food for the demons like me, and by all counts he has no chance of ever freeing you and your ever joining him in this life. {This being the case, will it not be prudent and wise for you to abandon a mortal being and instead accept me, as this acceptance would enable you to enjoy all the pleasures of life that are rightly yours. Say, what is the use of wasting your youthful days in lamenting and grieving for a person whom you will never see again against my wish?}

29: इत्युक्त्वा तामनिन्द्याङ्गीं स राक्षसगणेश्वरः

तत्रैवान्तर्हितो भूत्वा जगामाभिमतं दिशम्

30: राक्षसीभिः परिवृता वैदेही शोककर्षिता

सेव्यमाना त्रिजटया तत्रैव न्यवसत्तदा

29: ityuktvā tāmanindyāṅgīm sa rākṣasagaṇeśvaraḥ
tatraivāntarhito bhūtvā jagāmābhimatāṃ diśam

30: rākṣasībhiḥ parivṛtā vaidehī śokakarśitā
sevyamānā trijaṭayā tatraiva nyavasattadā

Verse no. 29: After having thus addressed the noble Sita, Ravana went away from there in another direction of his choice.

Verse no. 30: Surrounded by the female demon guards and attended by Trijata (who was her only companion during her captivity, and with whom Sita could share her worries and grief, and who in turn always encouraged her to have patience and wait for the right moment of her liberation), Vaidehi (Sita) was overcome by grief. She sat there forlorn, sorrowful, and dejected."

Thus ends Canto 265.

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Canto 266:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: राघवस्तु ससौमित्रिः सुग्रीवेणाभिपालितः

वसन्माल्यवतः पृष्ठे ददर्श विमलं नभः

2: स दृष्ट्वा विमले व्योम्नि निर्मलं शशलक्षणम्

ग्रहनक्षत्रताराभिरनुयातममित्रहा

3: कुमुदोत्पलपद्मानां गन्धमादाय वायुना

महीधरस्थः शीतेन सहसा प्रतिबोधितः

4: प्रभाते लक्ष्मणं वीरमभ्यभाषत दुर्मनाः

सीतां संस्मृत्य धर्मात्मा रुद्धां राक्षसवेश्मनि

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: rāghavastu sasaumitriḥ sugrīveṇābhipālitaḥ
vasanmālyavataḥ pṛṣṭhe dadarśa vimalaṁ nabhaḥ

2: sa dr̥ṣṭvā vimale vyomni nirmalaṁ śaśalakṣaṇam
grahanakṣatratārābhiranuyātamamitrahā

3: kumudotpalapadmānāṁ gandhamādāya vāyunā
mahīdharasthaḥ śītena sahasā pratibodhitaḥ

4: prabhāte lakṣmaṇaṁ vīramabhyabhāṣata durmanāḥ
sītāṁ saṁsmṛtya dharmātmā ruddhāṁ rākṣasaveśmani

{After installing Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha, Lord Ram and Laxman decided to spend the rainy season on Mt. Malyavan in order wait for the right time for launching a campaign to free Sita held captive in Lanka, as well as to give ample time

to Sugriv to reinforce his hold on the kingdom which was earlier under the control of Vaali, his rival, and use this interim period to find out about the whereabouts of Sita, and also collect his army of monkey-and-bear warriors with which to march to Lanka.

But since four months of the rainy season had passed and there was no word of any progress from Sugriv, Lord Ram felt annoyed and anguished, thinking that Sugriv was ungrateful and selfish as he had forgotten the Lord's work of finding and freeing Sita from the clutches of her abductor, and instead had become indulgent in pleasures and sensual gratifications once he gained the crown of the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha.

With these thoughts worrying the Lord, he felt frustrated. He summoned his brother Laxman and asked him to go to Sugriv and find out what the situation was, and what was the reason for the delay. Should it turn out that Sugriv has neglected the Lord's work, then Laxman ought to threaten him with dire consequences and warn him that he risks to face the same fate that his brother Vaali had met at the hands of Lord Ram--i.e. death.

But when Laxman met Sugriv, the latter informed him that he was not a vile and ungrateful creature, and he had not neglected Lord Ram's work. Sugriv accomanied Laxman to the place where Lord Ram on the mountain. He informed the Lord that he had sent messengers to find the whereabouts of Sita, and one group led by Angad and Hanuman were successul in this enterprise. Hanuman had crossed the ocean, met Sita in Lanka, reassured her of liberation, and had burnt the city of Lanka to punish Ravana and his clan for the mischief they had done. Sugriv said that the ground work is already done, and everything was in place to finally launch the campaign to Lanka. }

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "Raghava (Lord Ram) and Soumitri (Laxman) lived on the summit of Mt. Malyavan in the kingdom of Kishkindha under the titular protection of its king Sugriv. One day, the Lord observed that the sky was clear (symbolising the end of the rainy season and the onset of the clear season of autumn).

Verse no. 2: In that clear sky during the night, Lord Ram, who was a destroyer of enemies, saw the unblemished moon, the planets, the nakshatras and the stars dotting the majestic canopy of the dark night.

Verse no. 3: The breeze was redolent with the fragrance of water lilies, blue lotuses and pink lotuses. This charming environment suddenly reminded Lord Ram about Sita whom he loved so much and who was missing from his side. His heart and emotions were stirred.

Verse no. 4: Lord Ram, who held Dharma¹ steadfastly in his heart, became distracted with the thoughts of Sita being held captive in an alien land under the command of a vile creature (the demon Ravana) who had no Dharma in his heart. At dawn, the noble-hearted Lord Ram, being overcome with grief, and feeling distraught and indignant at Sugriv's apparent neglect of the Lord's pending work, called his younger brother Laxman and spoke to him as follows:--

5: गच्छ लक्ष्मण जानीहि किष्किन्धायां कपीश्वरम्
प्रमत्तं ग्राम्यधर्मेषु कृतघ्नं स्वार्थपण्डितम्

6: योऽसौ कुलाधमो मूढो मया राज्येऽभिषेचितः

सर्वानरगोपुच्छा यमृक्षाश्च भजन्ति वै

7: यदर्थं निहतो वाली मया रघुकुलोद्वह

त्वया सह महाबाहो किष्किन्धोपवने तदा

8: कृतघ्नं तमहं मन्ये वानरापसदं भुवि

यो मामेवंगतो मूढो न जानीतेऽद्य लक्ष्मण

9: असौ मन्ये न जानीते समयप्रतिपादनम्

कृतोपकारं मां नूनमवमन्याल्पया धिया

10: यदि तावदनुद्युक्तः शेते कामसुखात्मकः

नेतव्यो वालिमार्गेण सर्वभूतगतिं त्वया

11: अथापि घटतेऽस्माकमर्थे वानरपुंगवः

तमादायैहि काकुत्स्थ त्वरावान्भव मा चिरम्

5: gaccha lakṣmaṇa jānīhi kiṣkindhāyāṃ kapīśvaram
pramattaṃ grāmyadharmeṣu kṛtaghnaṃ svārthapaṇḍitam

6: yo'sau kulādhamo mūḍho mayā rājye'bhiṣecitaḥ
sarvavānaragopucchā yamṛkṣāśca bhajanti vai

7: yadārthaṃ nihato vālī mayā raghukulodvaha
tvayā saha mahābāho kiṣkindhopavane tadā

8: kṛtaghnaṃ tamahaṃ manye vānarāpasadaṃ bhuvī
yo māmevaṃgato mūḍho na jānīte'dya lakṣmaṇa

9: asau manye na jānīte samayapratipādanam
kṛtopakāraṃ māṃ nūnamavamanyālpayā dhiyā

10: yadi tāvadanudyuktaḥ śete kāmasukhātmakaḥ
netavyo vālimārgeṇa sarvabhūtagatiṃ tvayā

11: athāpi ghaṭate'smākamarthe vānarapuṃgavaḥ
tamādāyaihi kākutstha tvarāvānbhava mā ciram

Verse no. 5: Lord Ram said to Laxman: "Oh my dear brother! Go to Kishkindha and seek out the lord of monkeys. He seems to be intoxicated and ungrateful, follows the dharma of the vulgar, and is only concerned about fulfilling his own selfish interests. {Here, the Lord was referring to Sugriv seeking his help to get rid of Vaali, his elder brother, in order to get the crown of Kishkindha. And once that objective was accomplished, it seems that Sugriv forgot all his promises and obligations towards Lord Ram.}

Verse no. 6: That stupid one, the worst of his lineage, has been installed by me on the throne of the kingdom of the monkeys. All the subjects of this kingdom, such as the

monkeys, apes and bears, pay homage to him, and this has gone to his head, making him proud and haughty.

Verse no. 7: Oh mighty-armed one! Oh extender of Raghu's lineage! With your help and consent, it is for his sake that I had slayed Vaali in the forest of Kishkindha (so that Sugriv could be restored with his right to the crown of this kingdom which had been snatched from him by Vaali).

Verse no. 8: I think that this fellow Sugriv is the worst amongst the members of his race of monkeys, as he seems to me to be the most ungrateful creature living on earth. Oh Laxman! That stupid one ignores me, and pretends that I am stranger with whom he has nothing to do; he does not seem to even know that I live here.

Verse no. 9: I think that, because of his ignorance, he does not know how to honour an agreement, keep promises and honour one's obligations. He ignores me, he neglects me, though I have performed a good deed for him. {To wit, I sided with him in a family dispute with which I primarily had nothing to do with. Sugriv has forgotten it, it seems. Say, what would have been his fate had I not intervened on his behalf; wouldn't he have lived a life in exile, neglected, disinherited and disenfranchised?}

Verse no. 10: If he is fool enough to lazily indulge in the pleasures of the senses, neglecting someone who has helped him get that chance, then punishment must be meted out to him: you must send him along the path followed by Vaali by slaying him too, as death is the destination of all mortal beings.

Verse no. 11: Oh Kakutstha (Laxman)! But if you find that Sugriv, who is strong and powerful, is ready to serve our purpose, then bring him here immediately. With this mandate, please go without any delay."

12: इत्युक्तो लक्ष्मणो भ्रात्रा गुरुवाक्यहिते रतः

प्रतस्थे रुचिरं गृह्य समागणगुणं धनुः

किष्किन्धाद्वारमासाद्य प्रविवेशानिवारितः

13: सक्रोध इति तं मत्वा राजा प्रत्युद्ययौ हरिः

तं सदारो विनीतात्मा सुग्रीवः प्लवगाधिपः

पूजया प्रतिजग्राह प्रीयमाणस्तदर्हया

14: तमब्रवीद्रामवचः सौमित्रिरकुतोभयः

स तत्सर्वमशेषेण श्रुत्वा प्रहवः कृताञ्जलिः

12: ityukto lakṣmaṇo bhrātrā guruvākyahite rataḥ
pratasthe ruciraṃ gṛhya samāgaṇagaṇaṃ dhanuḥ
kiṣkindhādvāramāsādyā praviveśānivāritaḥ

13: sakrodha iti taṃ matvā rājā pratyudyayau hariḥ
taṃ sadāro viniātāmā sugrīvaḥ plavagādhīpaḥ

pūjayā pratijagrāha prīyamāṇastadarhayā

14: tamabravīdrāmavacaḥ saumitirakutobhayah
sa tatsarvamaśeṣeṇa śrutvā prahvaḥ kṛtāñjaliḥ

Verse no. 12: Laxman was always obedient and devoted to the words of his elders. So therefore, when his elder brother, Lord Ram, instructed him as aforesaid, he immediately grabbed his bow and strung it, picked up his infallible arrow, and proceeded towards the gate of the capital of Kishkindha. Once there, he entered fearlessly, without waiting for permission, and without anyone even daring to stop him.

Verse no. 13: When Sugriv got information of Laxman's arrival in a stern mood, he realised that the latter was angry. Gathering courage, he took his wife along and went forward to meet and welcome Laxman, offering him obeisance and due respect that one would show to a most honourable guest.

Verse no. 14: Without any fear or formality, Soumitri (Laxman) told Sugriv whatever Lord Ram had told him to convey to the latter."

Sage Markandeya said to Yudhisthira: "Oh Indra among kings! On hearing all this, Sugriv, the lord of the monkeys, joined his hands in salutation. {Sugriv assumed a very polite and humble demeanour, gesturing to Laxman to calm down as he, Sugriv, was always at the service of Lord Ram without any questions asked.}

15: सभृत्यदारो राजेन्द्र सुग्रीवो वानराधिपः

इदमाह वचः प्रीतो लक्ष्मणं नरकुञ्जरम्

16: नास्मि लक्ष्मण दुर्मेधा न कृतघ्नो न निर्घृणः

श्रूयतां यः प्रयत्नो मे सीतापर्येषणे कृतः

17: दिशः प्रस्थापिताः सर्वे विनीता हरयो मया

सर्वेषां च कृतः कालो मासेनागमनं पुनः

18: यैरियं सवना साद्रिः सपुरा सागराम्बरा

विचेतव्या मही वीर सग्रामनगराकरा

19: स मासः पञ्चरात्रेण पूर्णो भवितुमर्हति

ततः श्रोष्यसि रामेण सहितः सुमहत्प्रियम्

15: sabhṛtyadāro rājendra sugrīvo vānarādhipaḥ
idamāha vacaḥ prīto lakṣmaṇaṁ narakuñjaram

16: nāsmi lakṣmaṇa durmedhā na kṛtaghno na nirghṛṇaḥ
śrūyatāṁ yaḥ prayatno me sītāparyeṣaṇe kṛtaḥ

17: diśaḥ prasthāpitāḥ sarve vinītā harayo mayā
sarveṣāṁ ca kṛtaḥ kālo māsenāgamaṇaṁ punaḥ

18: yairiyaṃ savanā sādriḥ sapurā sāgarāmbārā
vīcetavyā mahī vīra sagrāmanagarākārā

19: sa māsaḥ pañcarātreṇa pūrṇo bhavitumarhati
tataḥ śroṣyasi rāmeṇa sahitaḥ sumahatpriyam

Verse no. 15: With his servants and wives, Sugriv spoke the following words to Laxman who was like an elephant amongst men (i.e. he was very bold, strong and fearless).

Verse no. 16: Sugriv said: "Oh venerable Laxman! I am not evil fellow, nor low in intelligence. Neither am I ungrateful, or one without compassion. Please listen to the efforts I have made to find Sita.

Verse no. 17: Skilled monkeys have been sent by me in all the directions. One month has been decided for all of them to return.

Verse no. 18: Oh brave one! The entire earth, with its forests, mountains, villages, towns and mines, girded by the ocean, will be searched by them¹.

[Note--¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 22.]

Verse no. 19: That time frame will be complete in another five nights. Then, you and Lord Ram will learn about the great service I have rendered."

20: इत्युक्तो लक्ष्मणस्तेन वानरेन्द्रेण धीमता

त्यक्त्वा रोषमदीनात्मा सुग्रीवं प्रत्यपूजयत्

21: स रामं सहसुग्रीवो माल्यवत्पृष्ठमास्थितम्

अभिगम्योदयं तस्य कार्यस्य प्रत्यवेदयत्

20: ityukto lakṣmaṇastena vānarendreṇa dhīmatā
tyaktvā roṣamadīnātmā sugrīvaṃ pratyapūjayat

21: sa rāmaṃ sahasugrīvo mālyavatpṛṣṭhamāsthitam
abhigamyodayaṃ tasya kāryasya pratyavedayat

Verse no. 20: Thus politely addressed by Sugriv, who was wise and the lord of the monkeys, Laxman discarded his anger immediately and returned Sugriv's greetings.

Verse no. 21: Accompanied by Sugriv, Laxman returned to Mt. Malyavan to report to Lord Ram. He told the Lord about the steps taken by Sugriv towards their objective of finding about the whereabouts of Sita. {Lord Ram was informed that groups of monkey warriors have been sent by Sugriv in all the four directions of earth. They have been instructed to report back in a month's time which would end soon. So they must wait for their report.}

22: इत्येवं वानरेन्द्रास्ते समाजग्मुः सहस्रशः
 दिशस्तिस्रो विचित्याथ न तु ये दक्षिणां गताः
 23: आचख्युस्ते तु रामाय महीं सागरमेखलाम्
 विचितां न तु वैदेह्या दर्शनं रावणस्य वा
 24: गतास्तु दक्षिणामाशां ये वै वानरपुंगवाः
 आशावांस्तेषु काकुत्स्थः प्राणानार्तोऽप्यधारयत्

22: ityevaṃ vānarendrāste samājagmuḥ sahasraśaḥ
 diśastisro vicitātha na tu ye dakṣiṇām gatāḥ

23: ācakhyuste tu rāmāya mahīm sāgaramekhalām
 vicitām na tu vaidehyā darśanaṃ rāvaṇasya vā

24: gatāstu dakṣiṇāmāśāṃ ye vai vānarapuṅgavāḥ
 āśāvāṃsteṣu kākutsthaḥ prāṇānārto'pyadhārayat

Verse no. 22: As has been said earlier, the great monkey warriors began to return in their thousands. All those who had gone in the three directions, north, east and west, came back, but those who had gone towards the south were yet to come back.

Verse no. 23: Those who came back told Lord Ram, "Oh Lord, we have searched the entire earth, with the ocean as a girdle. But unfortunately we have not been able to see either Vaidehi (Sita) or Ravana."

Verse no. 24: Though his heart was grief-stricken at this news, Kakutstha (Lord Ram) kept his patience as he was still hopeful. So he waited for the return of the brave monkeys who had gone in the southern direction.

25: द्विमासोपरमे काले व्यतीते प्लवगास्ततः
 सुग्रीवमभिगम्येदं त्वरिता वाक्यमब्रुवन्
 26: रक्षितं वालिना यत्तत्स्फीतं मधुवनं महत्
 त्वया च प्लवगश्रेष्ठ तद्भुङ्क्ते पवनात्मजः
 27: वालिपुत्रोऽङ्गदश्चैव ये चान्ये प्लवगर्षभाः
 विचेतुं दक्षिणामाशां राजन्प्रस्थापितास्त्वया
 28: तेषां तं प्रणयं श्रुत्वा मेने स कृतकृत्यताम्
 कृतार्थानां हि भृत्यानामेतद्भवति चेष्टितम्

25: dvimāsoparame kāle vyatīte plavagāstataḥ
 sugrīvamabhigamyedaṃ tvaritā vākyaṃ abruvan

26: rakṣitaṃ vālinā yattatsphitaṃ madhuvanaṃ mahat
tvayā ca plavagaśreṣṭha tadbhunkte pavanātmajaḥ

27: vāliputro'ṅgadaścaiva ye cānye plavagarṣabhāḥ
vicetuṃ dakṣiṇāmāśāṃ rājanprasthāpitāstvayā

28: teṣāṃ taṃ praṇayaṃ śrutvā mene sa kṛtakṛtyatām
kṛtārthānāṃ hi bhrtyānāmetadbhavati ceṣṭitam

Verse no. 25: When two months had passed, some monkeys hurriedly approached Sugriv and told him as follows:--

Verse no. 26: "Oh lord of the monkeys! The vast and richly endowed grove known as Madhuvana¹, was always protected by Vaali, and is now your favourite grove.

[Note--¹The word 'Madhuvan' has two parts--viz. Madhu and Vana. 'Madhu' means honey, and 'Vana' means a forest. Hence, Madhuvana was a forest where trees were laden by combs of the honey-bees from which honey dripped in abundance.]

Verse no. 27: It is now being enjoyed by the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman), Vaali's son Angada, as well as other great monkey warriors whom you had sent out in the southern direction."

Verse no. 28: Sugriv thought to himself: 'Such acts were only possible by servants who had accomplished their duties. So definitely they must have been successful in their mission.'¹

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.]

29: स तद्रामाय मेधावी शशंस प्लवगर्षभः

रामश्चाप्यनुमानेन मेने दृष्टां तु मैथिलीम्

30: हनूमत्प्रमुखाश्चपि विश्रान्तास्ते प्लवंगमाः

अभिजग्मुर्हरीन्द्रं तं रामलक्ष्मणसंनिधौ

31: गतिं च मुखवर्णं च दृष्ट्वा रामो हनूमतः

अगमत्प्रत्ययं भूयो दृष्ट्वा सीतेति भारत

32: हनूमत्प्रमुखास्ते तु वानराः पूर्णमानसाः

प्रणमुर्विधिवद्रामं सुग्रीवं लक्ष्मणं तथा

29: sa tadrāmāya medhāvī śaśaṃsa plavagarṣabhāḥ
rāmaścāpyanumānena mene dr̥ṣṭāṃ tu maithilīm

30: hanūmatpramukhāścāpi viśrāntāste plavaṅgamāḥ
abhijagmurharīndraṃ taṃ rāmalakṣmaṇasaṃnidhau

31: gatiṃ ca mukhavarṇaṃ ca dṛṣṭvā rāmo hanūmataḥ
agamatpratrayaṃ bhūyo dṛṣṭā sīteti bhārata

32: hanūmatpramukhāste tu vānarāḥ pūrṇamānasāḥ
praṇemurvidhivadrāmaṃ sugrīvaṃ lakṣmaṇaṃ tathā

Verse no. 29: Then Sugriv, the wise lord of the monkeys, went to Lord Ram and gave him this information. Lord Ram was also of the same view, i.e. that this team of monkey warriors must surely have found Sita (Maithili) because otherwise they wouldn't have dared to behave so joyously¹.

Verse no. 30: When those monkeys, with Hanuman at the forefront, had rested, they approached the king of the monkeys (Sugriv) who was with Lord Ram and Laxman.

Verse no. 31: Sage Markandeya continued: "Oh Yudhisthira, the noble descendant of the great king Bharata's lineage (bhārata)! On observing Hanuman's demeanours, the confidence in his gait and the radiant complexion of his face (that naturally comes to one who has been successful in a very important mission), Lord Ram was convinced that Sita must have been seen.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 29.]

Verse no. 32: The Lord was sure that since Hanuman was leading the team, it is certain that he was the one who had actually met Sita. When the group came close, all the monkey warriors prostrated themselves before Lord Ram, Sugriv and Laxman to pay their respects to the latter.

33: तानुवाचागतान्नामः प्रगृह्य सशरं धनुः

अपि मां जीवयिष्यध्वमपि वः कृतकृत्यता

34: अपि राज्यमयोध्यायां कारयिष्याम्यहं पुनः

निहत्य समरे शत्रूनाहत्य जनकात्मजाम्

35: अमोक्षयित्वा वैदेहीमहत्वा च रिपून्नाणे

हतदारोऽवधूतश्च नाहं जीवितुमुत्सहे

33: tānuvācāgatānrāmaḥ pragrhya saśaraṃ dhanuḥ
api māṃ jīvayiṣyadhvamapi vaḥ kṛtakṛtyatā

34: api rājyamayodhyāyāṃ kārayiṣyāmyaham punaḥ
nihatya samare śatrūnāhr̥tya janakātmajām

35: amokṣayitvā vaidehīmahatvā ca ripūnraṇe
hr̥tadāro'vadhūtaśca nāham jīvitumutsahe

Verse no. 33: Lord Ram spontaneously picked up his bow and arrows¹ as he spoke to the monkey warriors who had just arrived. "Would you give me a news that will restore my life? Have you been successful in your mission in finding Sita?"

Verse no. 34: Having killed my enemies in battle and having recovered Janak's daughter (Sita, my wife), say, will I again rule the kingdom of Ayodhya?

Verse no. 35: I have been robbed of my wife and honour. As long as Vaidehi (Sita) is not freed and my enemies are not killed in battle, I have no desire to be alive, because I have been humiliated enough, and any other man of honour in my situation would also prefer death over a life of abject dishonour and distress that I would be forced to live if I cannot free Sita and restore my honour, self-respect and dignity."

[Note--¹Why did Lord Ram pick his bow and arrows? Well, it was a spontaneous emotional reaction on his part to indicate that he was stirred and ready to take on his enemies who had dared to abduct his wife Sita. He implied that he did not wish to waste even a moment, and wanted to go after Sita's abductors immediately.]

36: इत्युक्तवचनं रामं प्रत्युवाचानिलात्मजः

प्रियमाख्यामि ते राम दृष्टा सा जानकी मया

37: विचित्य दक्षिणामाशां सपर्वतवनाकराम्

श्रान्ताः काले व्यतीते स्म दृष्टवन्तो महागुहाम्

38: प्रविशामो वयं तां तु बहुयोजनमायताम्

अन्धकारां सुविपिनां गहनां कीटसेविताम्

39: गत्वा सुमहदध्वानमादित्यस्य प्रभां ततः

दृष्टवन्तः स्म तत्रैव भवनं दिव्यमन्तरा

40: मयस्य किल दैत्यस्य तदासीद्वेश्म राघव

तत्र प्रभावती नाम तपोऽतप्यत तापसी

41: तथा दत्तानि भोज्यानि पानानि विविधानि च

भुक्त्वा लब्धबलाः सन्तस्तयोक्तेन पथा ततः

36: ityuktavacanam rāmaṁ pratyuvācānilātmajāḥ
priyamākhyāmi te rāma dr̥ṣṭā sā jānakī mayā

37: vicitya dakṣiṇāmāśāṁ saparvatavanākārām
śrāntāḥ kāle vyatīte sma dr̥ṣṭavanto mahāguhām

38: praviśāmo vyaṁ tāṁ tu bahuyojanamāyatām
andhakārām suvipinām gahanām kīṭasevitām

39: gatvā sumahadadhvānamādityasya prabhām tataḥ
dr̥ṣṭavantaḥ sma tatraiva bhavanam divyamantarā

40: mayasya kila daityasya tadāsīdveśma rāghava
tatra prabhāvatī nāma tapo'tapyata tāpasī

41: tayā dattāni bhojyāni pānāni vividhāni ca
bhuktvā labdhabalāḥ santastayoktena pathā tataḥ

Verse no. 36: When Lord Ram had spoken thus, the son of the wind-god stepped forward and replied to him: "Oh honourable Lord! Please don't despair, for I have brought good news for you that would cheer your heart. Trust me, I have seen Sita; I have personally met and conversed with her.

Verse no. 37: After searching extensively in the southern direction, with its mountains, forests and mines, we were exhausted. After some time, we eventually came upon a huge cave.

Verse no. 38: We entered it and found it to be many yojanas (miles) long. It was dark, forested, deep, and infested with insects.

Verse no. 39: We traversed a long way through it, and then (at its other end) we saw the splendour of the sun and a celestial palace nearby.

Verse no. 40: Oh Raghava! That residence belonged to the daitya (a subterranean demon) named Maya. A lady ascetic named Prabhavati was engaged in austerities there.

Verse no. 41: When she saw us, hungry and thirsty, she was moved with pity and compassion for us, and gave us many types of refreshments to eat and drink. When we had regained our strength after eating, we proceeded along the road that she had pointed out.

[Note--¹This lady ascetic was doing penance and austerity to attain liberation from her bondage. The demon Maya had ensnared her, and she wished deliverance from her bondage. When she heard the reason of the group of monkey and bear warriors wandering in the forest in search of Sita, she realised that this was the moment she was waiting for--as helping them out of the distress which they found themselves in, and showing them a way to find Sita that would serve the cause of the noble and honourable Lord Ram would definitely pave the way for her liberation, as this single noble deed of hers would negate or neutralise the bad effects of the sins that she may have accumulated in the past.

Hence, she not only fed the hungry and thirsty distressed team of monkeys and bears, but also comforted them. She showed them the path that they should take, a path that would lead them straight in the direction where they would ultimately find Sita.

This episode of the female ascetic meeting the messengers of Lord Ram, feeding them, and helping them by showing the path out of the labyrinth of the cave and reaching straight to the point from where they can proceed further to find Sita, has been narrated in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24--to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 25.]

42: निर्याय तस्मादुद्देशात्पश्यामो लवणाम्भसः

समीपे सहयमलयौ दर्दुरं च महागिरिम्

43: ततो मलयमारुह्य पश्यन्तो वरुणालयम्

विषण्णा व्यथिताः खिन्ना निराशा जीविते भृशम्

44: अनेकशतविस्तीर्णं योजनानां महोदधिम्

तिमिनक्रझषावासं चिन्तयन्तः सुदुःखिताः

42: niryāya tasmāduddesātpaśyāmo lavaṇāmbhasaḥ
samīpe sahyamalayau darduraṃ ca mahāgirim

43: tato malayamāruhya paśyanto varuṇālayam
viṣaṇṇā vyathitāḥ khinnā nirāśā jīvite bhr̥śam

44: anekaśatavistīrṇaṃ yojanānāṃ mahodadhim
timinakrajaṣāvāsaṃ cintayantaḥ suduḥkhitāḥ

Verse no. 42: Emerging from the labyrinthine cave, we saw the salty ocean in front of us¹, and near it there were great mountains called Sahya, Malaya and Dardura.

[Note--¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 25.]

Verse no. 43: Ascending Malaya mountain, we beheld Varuna's abode¹. This formidable sight, which stood like a barrier before us, and seemed to block our way ahead, made us completely frustrated and heart-broken. We were extremely miserable, dejected and tired. We gave up all hope of life (because it seemed impossible for us to get over this obstacle that stretched before us till the sky).

[Note--¹Varun is the god of water, and by extension of clouds, rivers and oceans, or any thing related to water. Hanuman says that the team, refreshed with drinks and food offered by the ascetic in the cave, had regained its energy and vigour, and being forest dwellers and of the monkey race that is naturally accustomed to climbing tall trees and mountains, this team easily climbed this high mountain in the hope of getting some pathway that may lead them to the place where they would find Sita, or least give them a chance to see that place from a high viewing platform. But as they went higher and higher up the mountain slope, they were engulfed in thick blankets of clouds, and were surrounded by dense fog and a shroud of mist that obstructed all view.

From that vantage point, all they could see was the ocean stretching till the horizon before them.]

Verse no. 44: We thought about this great ocean, which was many hundreds of yojanas (miles) wide. It was the abode of whales, crocodiles and large fish. This formidable sight left us disheartened, distressed and dismayed, for we just could not figure out how to overcome this obstruction. All our progress was stalled.

45: तत्रानशनसंकल्पं कृत्वासीना वयं तदा
 ततः कथान्ते गृध्रस्य जटायोरभवत्कथा
 46: ततः पर्वतशृङ्गाभं घोररूपं भयावहम्
 पक्षिणं दृष्टवन्तः स्म वैनतेयमिवापरम्
 47: सोऽस्मानतर्कयद्भोक्तुमथाभ्येत्य वचोऽब्रवीत्
 भोः क एष मम भ्रातुर्जटायोः कुरुते कथाम्
 48: संपातिर्नाम तस्याहं ज्येष्ठो भ्राता खगाधिपः
 अन्योन्यस्पर्धयारूढावावामादित्यसंसदम्
 49: ततो दग्धाविमौ पक्षौ न दग्धौ तु जटायुषः
 तदा मे चिरदृष्टः स भ्राता गृध्रपतिः प्रियः
 निर्दग्धपक्षः पतितो ह्यहमस्मिन्महागिरौ
 50: तस्यैवं वदतोऽस्माभिर्हतो भ्राता निवेदितः
 व्यसनं भवतश्चेदं संक्षेपाद्वै निवेदितम्

45: tatrānaśanasamkalpaṃ kṛtvāsīnā vayaṃ tadā
 tataḥ kathānte gr̥dhrasya jaṭāyorabhavatkathā

46: tataḥ parvataśṛṅgābhaṃ ghorarūpaṃ bhayāvaham
 pakṣiṇaṃ dr̥ṣṭavantaḥ sma vainateyamivāparam

47: so'smānatarkayadbhoktumathābhyetya vaco'bravīt
 bhoḥ ka eṣa mama bhrāturjaṭāyoḥ kurute kathām

48: saṃpātirnāma tasyāhaṃ jyeṣṭho bhrātā khagādhipaḥ
 anyonyasparḍhayārūḍhāvāvamādityasaṃsadam

49: tato dagdhāvimau pakṣau na dagdhau tu jaṭāyuṣaḥ
 tadā me ciradr̥ṣṭaḥ sa bhrātā gr̥dhrapatiḥ priyaḥ
 nirdagdhapakṣaḥ patito hyahamasminmahāgirau

50: tasyaivaṃ vadato'smābhirhato bhrātā niveditaḥ
 vyasanaṃ bhavataścedaṃ saṃkṣepādvai niveditam

Verse no. 45: We decided to sit there and fast unto death¹. In the course of our conversation, we began to talk about the vulture Jatayu².

[Note--¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 26.

²All the members of this group of monkeys had heard the story of Jatayu, the vulture who had tried to save Sita by attempting to stop Ravana from abducting her. In the fight that followed, Ravana had cut off the poor vulture's wings, as a result of which Jatayu fell mortally wounded on the ground. When Lord Ram was wandering in the forest searching for Sita, he met Jatayu, who was the first one to tell the Lord about

Ravana taking her away, and the rough direction in which he proceeded, which was to the south. This led the Lord to move in the southern direction, which ultimately led him to meet Sugriv. This episode of Jatau has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-22 that precede Doha no. 29; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30--to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31.

Now, these monkey warriors remembered Jatau because they knew that vultures had great sights, and they could see much far away than others could see. They regretted that Jatau was no more, otherwise he surely would have come to help them, both by flying high up in the sky and locating the exact location of Sita, and also by asking one of them to ride on his back so that he could take the rider straight across the ocean to meet Sita, and also bring him back.]

Verse no. 46: We then saw a terrible and fearsome bird emerge from one of the caves on the side of the mountain. It was as a gigantic bird, no less than a huge mountain. It looked like another son of Vinata, the mother of the king of birds¹.

[Note--¹Vinata was the mother of Garud, the heavenly Eagle and a mount of Lord Vishnu, and of Aruna, the charioteer of the Sun God. She was one of the daughters of Prajapati Daksha, and wife of sage Kashyap. Hanuman means here that when the team saw this huge bird, they thought it was a celestial being, for no bird on earth could be as huge as it was. And this is why they thought that it was one of the birds directly born from the womb of Vinata, the mother of Garud.]

Verse no. 47: Desirous of eating us, it approached us and asked, "Who is it that is talking about my brother Jatayu?"

Verse no. 48: I am his elder brother Sampati, and am the king of the birds. In a contest with each other, we rose up towards the seat of the sun.

Verse no. 49: As a consequence of this, my wings were burnt, but not those of Jatayu. That was the last time I saw my beloved brother, the king of the vultures. My wings having been burnt, I fell down on this giant mountain."

[Note--¹This has also been narrated almost verbatim in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 27, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 28.]

Verse no. 50: Hanuman continued: "Oh Lord, when Sampati told us about himself, we told him about his brother Jatayu being slain (by Ravana as he was trying to save Sita, who is the wife of Lord Ram.) We then briefly told him about the calamity that had befallen you.

51: स संपातिस्तदा राजञ्श्रुत्वा सुमहदप्रियम्

विषण्णचेताः पप्रच्छ पुनरस्मानरिंदम

52: कः स रामः कथं सीता जटायुश्च कथं हतः

इच्छामि सर्वमेवैतच्छ्रोतुं प्लवगसत्तमाः

53: तस्याहं सर्वमेवैतं भवतो व्यसनागमम्
प्रायोपवेशने चैव हेतुं विस्तरतोऽब्रुवम्

54: सोऽस्मानुत्थापयामास वाक्येनानेन पक्षिराट्
रावणो विदितो मह्यं लङ्का चास्य महापुरी

55: दृष्टा पारे समुद्रस्य त्रिकूटगिरिकन्दरे
भवित्री तत्र वैदेही न मेऽस्त्यत्र विचारणा

51: sa sampātistadā rājañśrutvā sumahadapriyam
viṣaṇṇacetāḥ papraccha punarasmānariṃdama

52: kaḥ sa rāmaḥ katham sītā jaṭāyuśca katham hataḥ
icchāmi sarvamevaitacchrotuṃ plavagasattamāḥ

53: tasyāhaṃ sarvamevaitaṃ bhavato vyasanāgamam
prāyopaveśane caiva hetuṃ vistarato'bruvam

54: so'smānutthāpayāmāsa vākyenānena pakṣirāt
rāvaṇo vidito mahyaṃ laṅkā cāsyā mahāpurī

55: drṣṭā pāre samudrasya trikūṭagirikandare
bhavitrī tatra vaidehī na me'styatra vicāraṇā

Verse no. 51: Oh Lord! On hearing this (that his brother Jatayu has died), Sampati was extremely miserable. Oh destroyer of enemies! In a dejected frame of mind, he again asked us--

Verse no. 52: 'Who is Lord Ram? Who is Sita? How was Jatayu killed? Oh great monkeys! I wish to hear everything about this, so please tell me.'

Verse no. 53: Oh Lord, I then told him everything about the misfortune that had befallen you, and while narrating it the episode of Jatayu being killed and Sita being abducted was obviously revealed to him. I also told him the reason for our deciding to fast to death (because we had failed in our mission of finding Sita, and were ashamed to return empty-handed to Lord Ram, that too after the set time frame of one month which has already elapsed).

Verse no. 54: But that king of birds made us arise with his encouraging words. He exhorted us and lifted our sagging spirits by saying: 'I know Ravana and his great city of Lanka.'

Verse no. 55: I have seen it across the ocean, in a valley of Mount Trikuta. Vaidehi must be there. I have no doubt on this score.'

[Note--Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.]

56: इति तस्य वचः श्रुत्वा वयमुत्थाय सत्वराः

सागरप्लवने मन्त्रं मन्त्रयामः परंतप

57: नाध्यवस्यद्यदा कश्चित्सागरस्य विलङ्घने

ततः पितरमाविश्य पुप्लुवेऽहं महार्णवम्

शतयोजनविस्तीर्णं निहत्य जलराक्षसीम्

56: iti tasya vacaḥ śrutvā vayamutthāya satvarāḥ

sāgaraplavane mantraṃ mantrayāmaḥ paraṃtapa

57: nādhyavasyadyadā kaścitsāgarasya vilaṅghane

tataḥ pitaramāviśya pupluve'haṃ mahārṇavam

śatayojanavistīrṇaṃ nihatya jalarākṣasīm

Verse no. 56: Hearing him speak these words of encouragement, we swiftly got up. Oh scorcher of enemies! We consulted amongst ourselves about how one might cross the ocean.

Verse no. 57: But no one had the courage to jump across the width of the mighty ocean¹. I, however, invoked the energy of my father, the wind-god. With that, I jumped across the great ocean, a hundred yojanas wide². Enroute, I met a fierce ocean dwelling demoness, whom I had to slay as she obstructed my path³.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line no. 6-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

No one in the team had the courage to go and come back across the width of a hundred yojanas of the ocean (which is roughly 800 miles across). Jamvant, the elderly bear chief, cited his old age, and Angad, another senior member of our team, expressed his reservations, saying that he may go to Lanka, but had doubts about returning.

²Meanwhile, the elderly Jamvant reminded Hanuman that he was the son of the wind-god, and that his father would carry him aloft his shoulders as the wind has the power to go anywhere it wants, and carry anything away it wishes. {Refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 30 where Jamvant has said this in precise terms.}

The mighty power of the wind is evident when we see tornadoes, hurricanes and violent storms which can uproot and carry away roof tops and other heavy things in a mighty gust of wind. Therefore, the wind-god would surely help Hanuman fly like a kite.

Hanuman flew like an 'arrow'--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 1.

In fact, this ability to fly with the help of the wind-god had helped Hanuman on many other occasions too while he was in the service of Lord Ram. One famous occasion was when he had brought a far away mountain from the north of the mainland that had the desired herb needed to restore Laxman's life in the battle-field of Lanka when the latter lay wounded. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha

no. 55 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 58.}

³While on his way to Lanka via the air route, Hanuman's path was blocked by a female demoness who had the power to catch the shadow of anything flying overhead. In modern terms, we can call this a radar installed by Ravana to stop any threat to Lanka from the air. The demoness, as was her wont, caught hold of Hanuman's shadow and pulled him down. As was expected, Hanuman killed her--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 3.]

58: तत्र सीता मया दृष्टा रावणान्तःपुरे सती
उपवासतपःशीला भर्तृदर्शनलालसा
जटिला मलदिग्धाङ्गी कृशा दीना तपस्विनी
59: निमित्तैस्तामहं सीतामुपलभ्य पृथग्विधैः
उपसृत्याब्रुवं चार्यामभिगम्य रहोगताम्
60: सीते रामस्य दूतोऽहं वानरो मारुतात्मजः
त्वद्दर्शनमभिप्रेप्सुरिह प्राप्तो विहायसा

58: tatra sītā mayā dr̥ṣṭā rāvaṇāntaḥpure satī
upavāsatapaḥśīlā bharṭṛdarśanalālasā
jaṭilā maladigdhāṅgī kṛśā dīnā tapasvinī

59: nimittaistāmahaṃ sītāmupalabhya pṛthagvidhaiḥ
upasṛtyābruvaṃ cāryāmabhigamya rahogatām

60: sīte rāmasya dūto'haṃ vānaro mārutātmajaḥ
tvaddarśanamabhiprepsuriha prāpto vihāyasā

Verse no. 58: I then saw Sita, who is loyal, faithful, chaste and immaculate (satī), confined to a grove (of Ashoka trees) in the private part of Ravana's extensive palace (rāvaṇāntaḥpure)¹. I found her forlorn, sad and wretched. She has become very lean and weak as she is continuously engaged in fasting, hardly eating anything at all. Her mind is always engaged in the thoughts of her husband (i.e. Lord Ram) as she passes her time in observing austerities and doing penances. Her hair was matted and her body was caked with dirt. She presented a perfect picture of an ascetic².

[Note--¹The word 'rāvaṇāntaḥpure' has two parts--viz. Ravana and Anthapura. This latter word, Anthapura, strictly means the 'inner chambers or quarters of Ravana'. But it has been clearly mentioned earlier that Ravana had confined Sita to a small hermitage-like residential quarter in his private garden which had a grove of Ashoka trees. Even Ram Charit Manas quotes Hanuman as telling Lord Ram that he searched in the inner chambers of Ravana's palace but could not locate Sita--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 5.

This fact is also mentioned in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Sundar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-3 wherein it is clearly said that Hanuman searched for

Sita inside the palace of Ravana but could not locate Sita. Then he remembered the words of Lankini (Canto 1, verse no. 55), the female demon guard of Lanka whom he had met earlier at the time of entering the city, and hence went straight to the Ahoka grove.

This instance tells us that when interpreting ancient texts, where one would find many examples that seem contradictory if one were to read only the literal meaning of a given set of words or phrases, it is very important to see and understand the text from a wider perspective and a correct context.

²This description of Sita as given by Hanuman to Lord Ram here resonates with what he told the Lord about her in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 30--to Doha no. 31.]

Verse no. 59: I recognised that the lady was none other than Sita by the virtue of the various signs I have mentioned³. Then I approached her and spoke to her in private.

[Note--³Lanka was a demon kingdom, so obviously no human could be expected to be found there. Further, even if there was a possible chance of finding a human lady there, because Ravana was in the habit of abducting wives and daughters of great sages and kings of which he himself boasted before Sita (Canto 265, verse no. 10), she surely wouldn't be engaged in austerities and penances, abstaining from food, living a miserable and forlorn life, and looking like an ascetic in spite of the pomp and grandeur that surrounded her. She would, in all probability, enjoying life, and not suffering as Sita was.]

Verse no. 60: I told her: 'Oh Sita! I am a monkey who is the son of the wind-god. I am Lord Ram's messenger⁴. Travelling through the sky, I have come here, hoping to see you.

[Note--⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 13.]

61: राजपुत्रौ कुशलिनौ भ्रातरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ
सर्वशाखामृगेन्द्रेण सुग्रीवेणाभिपालितौ
62: कुशलं त्वाब्रवीद्रामः सीते सौमित्रिणा सह
सखिभावाच्च सुग्रीवः कुशलं त्वानुपृच्छति
63: क्षिप्रमेष्यति ते भर्ता सर्वशाखामृगैः सह
प्रत्ययं कुरु मे देवि वानरोऽस्मि न राक्षसः

61: rājaputrau kuśalīnau bhrātarau rāmalakṣmaṇau
sarvaśākhāmṛgendreṇa sugrīveṇābhipālitau

62: kuśalaṁ tvābravīdrāmaḥ sīte saumitriṇā saha
sakhībhāvācca sugrīvaḥ kuśalaṁ tvānupṛcchati

63: kṣīprameṣyati te bhartā sarvaśākhāmṛgaiḥ saha
pratyayaṃ kuru me devī vānaro'smi na rākṣasaḥ

Verse no. 61: The two brothers who are also princes (rājaputrau --- bhrātarau), i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, are well¹. They are under the protection of Sugriv, the king of the monkeys.

Verse no. 62: Oh Sita! Your husband Lord Ram, as well as his brother Laxman, has asked about your welfare. Because Sugriv is a friend of the two brothers, he too has enquired about your welfare.

Verse no. 63: Your husband will soon arrive here, with all the monkeys². Oh goddess! Have trust in me. I am a monkey and not a demon in disguise (and neither am I a liar or a pretender)."

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 14.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 16.]

64: मुहूर्तमिव च ध्यात्वा सीता मां प्रत्युवाच ह
अवैमि त्वां हनूमन्तमविन्ध्यवचनादहम्
65: अविन्ध्यो हि महाबाहो राक्षसो वृद्धसंमतः
कथितस्तेन सुग्रीवस्त्वदिवधैः सचिवैर्वृतः
66: गम्यतामिति चोक्त्वा मां सीता प्रादादिमं मणिम्
धारिता येन वैदेही कालमेतमनिन्दिता

64: muhūrtamiva ca dhyātvā sītā māṃ pratyuvāca ha
avaimi tvāṃ hanūmantamavindhyavacanādaham

65: avindhyo hi mahābāho rākṣaso vṛddhasaṃmataḥ
kathitastena sugrīvastvadvidhaiḥ sacivairvṛtaḥ

66: gamyatāmiti coktvā māṃ sītā prādādimam maṇim
dhāritā yena vaidehī kālametamaninditā

Verse no. 64: Thinking for an instant about what I had said, Sita replied, "From what Avindhya has said earlier to me, I am certain that I recognise you to be Hanuman.

Verse no. 65: Avindhya¹ is a mighty-armed demon, and he is also revered by the elders. He had told me that Sugriv is surrounded by advisers like you."

[Note--¹Avindhya was a wise and elderly demon who possessed wisdom and moral judgement. He was also an advisor of Ravana. He had counselled the demon king against harming Sita--refer: Canto 273, verse nos. 28-30 of this narrative. He had

earlier sent Trijata to assure Sita that she need not be afraid and feel hopeless as Ravana could do her no harm, and she would be reunited with her husband, Lord Ram, soon. In verse no. 64 above, it is also clear that he had even personally assured Sita of deliverance very soon; that Lord Ram's messenger named Hanuman, the son of the wind-god, would come to meet her.

It is to be noted here that the presence of these two characters, Avindhya and Trijata, as well as Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, in the demon kingdom, indicates that inspite of all the negativities and evil associated with Ravana and the demons as a whole, there were still elements of wisdom, goodness, morality and noble thoughts living there. It is also to be noted that this particular demon named Avindhya has not been mentioned in any other version of the Ramayana, including the celebrated Valmiki Ramayana, or Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas.]

Verse no. 66: 'Go now,' Sita said to me, and gave me this jewel. The unblemished Vaidehi has worn it for a long time².

[Note--²The 'jewel' was called Chudamani. It was worn by Sita in the locks of her long hairs. She had given it to Hanuman on his request so that Lord Ram would believe him that he has indeed met her--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

67: प्रत्ययार्थं कथां चेमां कथयामास जानकी

क्षिप्तामिषीकां काकस्य चित्रकूटे महागिरौ

भवता पुरुषव्याघ्र प्रत्यभिज्ञानकारणात्

68: श्रावयित्वा तदात्मानं ततो दग्ध्वा च तां पुरीम्

संप्राप्त इति तं रामः प्रियवादिनमर्चयत्

67: pratyayārthaṃ kathāṃ cemāṃ kathayāmāsa jānakī
kṣiptāmiṣīkāṃ kākasya citrakūṭe mahāgīrau
bhavatā puruṣavyāghra pratyabhijñānakāraṇāt

68: śrāvayitvā tadātmānaṃ tato dagdhvā ca tāṃ purīm
saṃprāpta iti taṃ rāmaḥ priyavādinamarcayat

Verse no. 67: Oh Lord, Janaki (Sita) also told me about a private incident that no one else knows except you and her. She told me that when I would narrate it in brief or hint about it to you, then you shall be finally convinced that I have indeed met Sita, for it is a confidential bit of information. Oh tiger amongst men! While dwelling on that great mountain of Chitrakoot, you hurled a straw at a crow¹.

Verse no. 68: This incident could not have been known by me had Sita not revealed it to me. Hence, oh Lord, be convinced about my meeting Sita in Lanka.

After this conversation, I burnt the city of Lanka as a token of revenge and retribution against Ravana and the demons in general for the suffering they had inflicted on the sinless Sita."

Lord Ram was very pleased and happy, and so he honoured Hanuman who had brought such pleasant news to him².

[Note--¹This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 1--to Sortha (a 2-line verse resembling a Doha) no. 2. Briefly, it is as follows;

One day, while Lord Ram and Sita sat on a slab of rock to relax, Indra's wicked son named Jayant wished to test the powers and abilities of Lord Ram, and to see if he indeed possessed some heavenly powers not possessed by ordinary human beings. With this intention, he assumed the form of a crow and bit Sita in her feet. When Lord Ram observed blood oozing out of the wound, he pulled out a blade of grass nearby and hurled it at the crow. This humble blade of grass immediately transformed into the Lord's infallible arrow, and dashed at Indra's wicked son. The latter ran from pillar to post, to all the corners of the world including heaven, and his father Indra to seek protection, but in vain--no one was ready to shelter him against the Lord's weapon. Finally, he met sage Narad who advised him to go and surrender before Lord Ram, asking for forgiveness, saying he was very sorry for his mischief. Narad told Jayant that since Lord Ram is very merciful, he would spare his life.

Terrified and at the end of his wits, Jayant went to Lord Ram and fell at his feet, seeking forgiveness and mercy. The Lord excused him and spared his life, but took out one of his eyes to alert others about this mischievous and stupid fellow.

²The 'Burning of Lanka' is a famous episode narrated in all the diverse versions of the Ramayana. It is narrated very briefly in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 24--to Doha no. 26, and more extensively in Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto no. 4.]

Thus ends Canto 266.

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Canto 267:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततस्तत्रैव रामस्य समासीनस्य तैः सह

समाजग्मुः कपिश्रेष्ठाः सुग्रीववचनात्तदा

2: वृतः कोटिसहस्रेण वानराणां तरस्विनाम्

श्वशुरो वालिनः श्रीमान्सुषेणो राममभ्ययात्

3: कोटीशतवृत्तौ चापि गजो गवय एव च

वानरेन्द्रौ महावीर्यौ पृथक्पृथग्दृश्यताम्

4: षष्टिकोटिसहस्राणि प्रकर्षन्प्रत्यदृश्यत

गोलाङ्गूलो महाराज गवाक्षो भीमदर्शनः

5: गन्धमादनवासी तु प्रथितो गन्धमादनः

कोटीसहस्रमुग्राणां हरीणां समकर्षत

6: पनसो नाम मेधावी वानरः सुमहाबलः
 कोटीर्दश द्वादश च त्रिंशत्पञ्च प्रकर्षति
 7: श्रीमान्दधिमुखो नाम हरिवृद्धोऽपि वीर्यवान्
 प्रचकर्ष महत्सैन्यं हरीणां भीमतेजसाम्
 8: कृष्णानां मुखपुण्ड्राणामृक्षाणां भीमकर्मणाम्
 कोटीशतसहस्रेण जाम्बवान्प्रत्यदृश्यत
 9: एते चान्ये च बहवो हरियूथपयूथपाः
 असंख्येया महाराज समीयू रामकारणात्

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tatastatraiva rāmasya samāsīnasya taiḥ saha
 samājagmuḥ kapiśreṣṭhāḥ sugrīvavacanāttadā

2: vṛtaḥ koṭisahasreṇa vānarāṇāṃ tarasvinām
 śvaśuro vāliṇaḥ śrīmānsuṣeṇo rāmamabhyayāt

3: koṭīśatavṛtau cāpi gajo gavaya eva ca
 vānarendrau mahāvīryau pṛthakpṛthagadrśyatām

4: ṣaṣṭikoṭisahasrāṇi prakarṣanpratyaḍṛśyata
 golāṅgūlo mahārāja gavākṣo bhīmadarśanaḥ

5: gandhamādanavāsī tu prathito gandhamādanaḥ
 koṭīśahasramugrāṇāṃ harīṇāṃ samakarṣata

6: panaso nāma medhāvī vānaraḥ sumahābalaḥ
 koṭīrdaśa dvādaśa ca triṃśatpañca prakarṣati

7: śrīmāndadhimukho nāma harivṛddho'pi vīryavān
 pracakarṣa mahatsainyaṃ harīṇāṃ bhīmatejasām

8: kṛṣṇānāṃ mukhapuṇḍrāṇāmṛkṣāṇāṃ bhīmakarmaṇām
 koṭīśatasahasreṇa jāmbavānpratyaḍṛśyata

9: ete cānye ca bahavo hariyūthapayūthapāḥ
 asaṃkhyeyā mahārāja samīyū rāmakāraṇāt

{Now came the time for the departure of Lord Ram's army, headed by Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, for Lanka on a mission to fight the demons and free Sita from their clutches. In this Canto no. 267 we read about the assembly of a multi-million strong army of monkey and bear warriors who came from all the corners of the earth on the command of Sugriv to join the campaign enthusiastically.

Finally, the colossus, fearless, energetic, dynamic and raring-to-go army marched forward with a tremendous roar; it was armed with tree trunks, boulders and

rocks which were the arms-of-choice for ancient forest-dwelling warrior tribes such as the monkeys and bears. This huge army finally arrived on the shore of the southern ocean. Now the question arose as how to cross it. Everyone made a suggestion according to his thinking, but ultimately it was decided that a bridge ought to be constructed for the crossing of the ocean. Lord Ram had threatened the deity of the ocean to let them pass or face annihilation. The deity pleaded mercy and promised to help when the bridge was constructed. Nala and Neela, who were the engineers and architects in the kingdom, got on the job and the mighty floating bridge was finally put into place, linking both the mainland on the north to the island of Lanka in the south.

Meanwhile, Ravana's brother Vibhishan decided to join ranks with Lord Ram after he was insulted and kicked out of Lanka by Ravana when he tried to prevail upon the demon king to avoid unnecessary bloodshed for a wrong cause.

This canto ends with Lord Ram's decision to send Angad as his emissary to the court of Ravana as a last attempt to avoid a bloody war.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said, "Meanwhile, as Lord Ram sat there with his companions, huge numbers of great monkey and bear warriors spread on every corners of the earth began to arrive in large numbers on Sugriv's instructions. They arrived in thousands of millions or trillions (many-many crores), in huge groups headed by their respective commanders as noted herein below¹.

[Note--¹As soon as it was decided that the campaign must get under way, Sugriv sent urgent messages through his channels of communication summoning all warriors to come forthwith to join the army. During peaceful times, the monkeys and bears lived wherever they found convenient, but were ready to come at short notice in a case of emergency. The regular army of Kishkindha was not too huge to undertake this mission alone against the ferocious demons, but it swelled beyond measure and acquired a fatal punch and power with the arrival of these reserve soldiers.

The immensity and energy of Lord Ram's unique army is described in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34--to Chaupai line no. 10 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 35.]

Verse no. 2: Surrounded by one thousand crores (100 x 10 million)² of swift monkeys, Sushena, Vaali's illustrious father-in-law, came to Lord Ram.

[Note--²The word 'crore' or the phrase 'thousand crores' are used to give an idea of the hugeness, the immensity and the colossal nature of Lord Ram's formidable army with its uncountable numbers of brave and fearless soldiers who were very fit and a perfect match to counter the threat from the ferocious demons. The word 'crore' itself means ten millions. One can imagine the spread of this army which was so vast that it covered the earth as far as the eye could see, from one horizon to another.]

Verse no. 3: Surrounded by one crore (10 million) monkeys, Gaja and Gavaya, who were as powerful and strong as Indra, the king of gods, and immensely valiant warriors amongst the monkeys, separately made their appearance.

Verse no. 4: Oh great king! Gavaksha was terrible to look at and had the tail of a cow. He arrived with sixty thousand crore (60,000 x 10 million) of his own warriors.

Verse no. 5: The famous Gandhamadana lived in Gandhamadana forest. He brought along one thousand crore (1000 x 10 million) of awesome monkeys.

Verse no. 6: The intelligent monkey named Panasa, who was immensely strong, had brought twelve crore and thirty-five million (i.e. 120 + 35 = 155 million) warriors under his command.

Verse no. 7: The brave and aged monkey, by the name of Dadhimukha (so-called because his face was white like curd; 'dadhi'=curd; 'mukha'=face), was illustrious. He brought a great army of monkeys that were awesome in energy.

Verse no. 8: Jambavan, the commander of the bears, brought a hundred thousand crore (1 billion) bear warriors with him. They were dark in complexion, heavily built, and ferocious in their actions. Their foreheads were lined with bristling grey hairs, giving them a majestic look of beauty and brilliance, attractive like that of a lotus flower.

Verse no. 9: There were many other leaders of huge herds of monkeys. Oh great king Yudisthira! Innumerable numbers too difficult to count had assembled for the sake of Lord Ram³.

[Note--³The immensity of Lord Ram's army has been succinctly summarised in one Doha no. 34 of Sundar Kand in Ram Charit Manas.]

10: शिरीषकुसुमाभानां सिंहानामिव नर्दताम्
 श्रूयते तुमुलः शब्दस्तत्र तत्र प्रधावताम्
 11: गिरिकूटनिभाः केचित्केचिन्महिषसंनिभाः
 शरदभ्रप्रतीकाशाः पिष्टहिङ्गुलकाननाः
 12: उत्पतन्तः पतन्तश्च प्लवमानाश्च वानराः
 उद्धुन्वन्तोऽपरे रेणून्समाजग्मुः समन्ततः
 13: स वानरमहालोकः पूर्णसागरसंनिभः
 निवेशमकरोत्तत्र सुग्रीवानुमते तदा
 14: ततस्तेषु हरीन्द्रेषु समावृत्तेषु सर्वशः
 तिथौ प्रशस्ते नक्षत्रे मुहूर्ते चाभिपूजिते
 15: तेन व्यूढेन सैन्येन लोकानुद्वर्तयन्निव
 प्रययौ राघवः श्रीमान्सुग्रीवसहितस्तदा

10: śiriṣakusumābhānāṃ siṃhānāmiva nardatām
 śrūyate tumulaḥ śabdastatra tatra pradhāvatām

11: girikūṭanibhāḥ kecitkecinmahiṣasaṃnibhāḥ
 śaradabhrapratikāśāḥ piṣṭahiṅgulakānanāḥ

12: utpatantaḥ patantaśca plavamānāśca vānarāḥ
uddhunvanto'pare reṇūnsamājagmuḥ samantataḥ

13: sa vānaramahālokaḥ pūrṇasāgarasaṃnibhaḥ
niveśamakarottatra sugrīvānumate tadā

14: tatasteṣu harīndreṣu samāvṛtteṣu sarvaśaḥ
tithau praśaste nakṣatre muhūrte cābhipūjite

15: tena vyūḍhena sainyena lokānudvartayanniva
prayayau rāghavaḥ śrīmānsugrīvasahitastadā

Verse no. 10: Their complexions were like the shirisha flowers in full bloom¹. As they ran around here and there energetically, they roared like an aroused lion, with a tumultuous sound that reverberated in all the directions².

[Note--¹The 'shirisha flower' belongs to the tree called 'Albizia lebbek' or the 'woman's tongue tree' belonging to the botanical family known as Fabaceae. It is also known as Indian walnut or frywood tree. This flower symbolises purity of purpose and softness as indicated by its white colour. The uniqueness of this flower is that its seeds rattle inside the pods, producing a rattling sound.

The use of this metaphor here implies that, one, the warriors chuckled and roared like the rattling sound of the seed inside the pods of this tree, and two, they were thoroughly enjoying joining this military campaign as they were aware it was being done for a noble purpose as is symbolised by the white colour of the flower.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8 and 10 that precede Doha no. 35.]

Verse no. 11: Some were like the peaks of mountains. Others were like buffaloes. Some were like clouds in autumn. Others had faces that appeared to be smeared in red vermilion paste.

Verse no. 12: Jumping, falling, and leaping energetically, the enthusiastic monkeys raised huge clouds of dust as they gathered from all the directions.

Verse no. 13: The large army of monkeys was like the ocean when it is full. On Sugriv's instructions, they set up their camps all around the place.

Verse no. 14: When all the valiant monkeys and bears, their commanders as well as the soldiers, had assembled from all the directions and had rested for sometime, and when the right time for departure arrived when the stars and the moment were auspicious for such endeavours, ---

Verse no. 15: --- The army of Lord Ram was arranged in battle formation and set forth on its grand mission at the appointed hour. As they marched forward, the earth shook and the mountains trembled³. They were led from the front by the illustrious Lord Ram and their brave king Sugriv.

[Note--³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 35.]

16: मुखमासीत्तु सैन्यस्य हनूमान्मारुतात्मजः

जघनं पालयामास सौमित्रिरकुतोभयः

17: बद्धगोधाङ्गुलित्राणौ राघवौ तत्र रेजतुः

वृत्तौ हरिमहामात्रेश्चन्द्रसूर्यौ ग्रहैरिव

18: प्रबभौ हरिसैन्यं तच्छालतालशिलायुधम्

सुमहच्छालिभवनं यथा सूर्योदयं प्रति

19: नलनीलाङ्गदक्राथमैन्ददिविदपालिता

ययौ सुमहती सेना राघवस्यार्थसिद्धये

16: mukhamāsittu sainyasya hanūmānmārutātmajaḥ
jaghanam pālayāmāsa saumitrirakutobhayaḥ

17: baddhagodhāṅgulitrāṇau rāghavau tatra rejatuh
vṛtau harimahāmātraīścandrasūryau grahairiva

18: prababhau harisainyaṁ tacchālatālaśīlāyudham
sumahacchālibhavanaṁ yathā sūryodayaṁ prati

19: nalanīlāṅgadakrāthamaindadvividapālītā
yayau sumahatī senā rāghavasyārthasiddhaye

Verse no. 16: Hanuman, the son of the wind-god, was in the front of the army. Soumitri (i.e. Laxman), who was without any fear and very vigilant, protected the rear.

Verse no. 17: The two Raghava brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman), with guards for their arms and the fingers, and having quivers tied around their waists, were surrounded by monkey warriors from all sides. They looked as glorious as the Sun and the Moon do in the sky amidst the planets and the stars. {In this metaphor, Lord Ram is the Sun, Laxman is the Moon, the monkey chiefs such as Sugriv, Hanuman, Angad etc. were like the planets, and the rest of the vast army like the countless stars that dot the sky.}

Verse no. 18: That army of monkeys and bears was armed with shala and tala trees, as well as boulders and rocks of various sizes, as weapons. It looked like an extensive field of rice at the time of sunrise¹.

[Note--¹Refer also to verse no. 27, Canto 268. The stalks of rice sway to and fro, and look vibrant and lively when the rays of the rising sun falls on them. Likewise, the huge army of Lord Ram appeared to sway majestically as the soldiers moved forward, packed in close formation, shoulder to shoulder, as their numbers was immensely

huge. They covered the land as far as the eyes could see just like a large rice field stretching from one corner to the other of the land as far as the eye can see.}

Verse no. 19: Protected by Nala, Nila, Angada, Kratha, Mainda and Dvividā (to mention only a few of the leading commanders), the extremely large and formidable army marched forward, for the sake of accomplishing the objective of Raghava (i.e. Lord Ram) {which was to free Sita from the captivity of the demons and punish them for the cruelty and all sorts of misdeeds they had been perpetrating for a long time under their ruthless king Ravana}.

20: विधिवत्सुप्रशस्तेषु बहुमूलफलेषु च

प्रभूतमधुमांसेषु वारिमत्सु शिवेषु च

21: निवसन्ती निराबाधा तथैव गिरिसानुषु

उपायाद्धरिसेना सा क्षारोदमथ सागरम्

22: द्वितीयसागरनिभं तद्बलं बहुलध्वजम्

वेलावनं समासाद्य निवासमकरोत्तदा

20: vidhivatsupraśasteṣu bahumūlaphaleṣu ca
prabhūtamadhumāṃseṣu vārimatsu śiveṣu ca

21: nivasantī nirābādhā tathaiva girisānuṣu
upāyāddharisenā sā kṣārodamatha sāgaram

22: dvitīyasāgaranibhaṃ tadbalaṃ bahuladhvajam
velāvanaṃ samāsādyā nivāsamakarottadā

Verse no. 20: Without any obstruction or hindrance, the army kept on moving swiftly and passed through extensive terrains covering large tracts of forested land which had areas specially rich in edible roots, fruits, an abundance of honey, and availability of pure drinking water (such as lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, waterfalls etc.). {This ensured that the army had no issues with food and refreshments, or places to relax for a while during the long-haul journey to the end of the land bordering the northern shore of the southern ocean.}

Verse no. 21: The army camped on the ridges of mountains during their journey. That army of monkeys then arrived finally at the northern shore of the salty ocean¹.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 35.]

Verse no. 22: That mighty military force, with its countless divisions with their individual flags, banners and insignia, and led by their own commanders, looked like a virtual second ocean (because the army stretched over land as far as the eye could see, just like the ocean that stretches from one end of the horizon to the other). This huge army went to the forest lying all along the coastal areas on the northern shore of the southern ocean, and began setting up camps here and there.

- 23: ततो दाशरथिः श्रीमान्सुग्रीवं प्रत्यभाषत
मध्ये वानरमुख्यानां प्राप्तकालमिदं वचः
24: उपायः को नु भवतां मतः सागरलङ्घने
इयं च महती सेना सागरश्चापि दुस्तरः
25: तत्रान्ये व्याहरन्ति स्म वानराः पटुमानिनः
समर्था लङ्घने सिन्धोर्न तु कृत्स्नस्य वानराः
26: केचिन्नौभिर्यवस्यन्ति केचिच्च विविधैः प्लवैः
नेति रामश्च तान्सर्वान्सान्त्वयन्प्रत्यभाषत

23: tato dāśarathīḥ śrīmānsugrīvaṃ pratyabhāṣata
madhye vānaramukhyānāṃ prāptakālamidaṃ vacaḥ

24: upāyaḥ ko nu bhavatāṃ mataḥ sāgaralaṅghane
iyaṃ ca mahatī senā sāgaraścāpi dustaraḥ

25: tatrānye vyāharanti sma vānarāḥ paṭumāninaḥ
samarthā laṅghane sindhorna tu kṛtsnasya vānarāḥ

26: kecinnaubhirvyavasyanti kecicca vividhaiḥ plavaiḥ
neti rāmaśca tānsarvānsāntvayanpratyabhāṣata

{The army now faced the daunting task of crossing the ocean which presented the first and the only barrier before it, preventing its march to Lanka. At this juncture, Lord Ram summoned his ministers and advisors, and sought their opinions and views as to the possible ways to overcome this hurdle. Everyone expressed his idea on the means that could possibly be employed for the huge army to get on the other side of the ocean, but none was deemed feasible by the Lord. Then Lord Ram proposed that they ought to construct a bridge across the surface of the ocean, and if the deity of the ocean caused any problem or hindrance then the Lord threatened to annihilate it.

The ocean's deity was terrified; it assumed a visible form to come and seek blessings from Lord Ram, promising to help him and his army get across.}

Verse no. 23: Then, in the midst of the chiefs among the monkeys, king Dashrath's illustrious son (dāśarathīḥ), i.e. Lord Ram, called Sugriv and others to discuss the matter and seek their opinion. Lord Ram addressed them as follows:

Verse no. 24: "What do you think is the best way to cross over the ocean? This army is large, and the ocean is difficult to cross."

Verse no. 25: Some monkeys, who regarded themselves as wise, thought that the monkeys were capable of jumping over the ocean, and so therefore they asserted that they be allowed to leap across the vast expanse of the ocean. {These monkey chieftains were over-confident of their abilities; they thought that since they are accustomed to jumping and leaping which was a part of their routine habit from birth, they were capable of leaping over the ocean as well. They forgot that leaping over trees, jumping on land and crossing narrow forest streams and rivulets was a

completely different prospect than doing so over the fathomless ocean, as one mistep would drown them. Besides this factor, the distance to be covered in one leap was formidable, a distance of 100 Yojanas, roughly 800 miles, which is not a joke!}

Verse no. 26: Others thought of boats, rafts, barges, or some kind of other floatable means of crossing. After patiently hearing all of them, and thanking them for their opinions, Lord Ram dismissed these proposals as being impractical. He replied as follow:--

27: शतयोजनविस्तारं न शक्ताः सर्ववानराः
क्रान्तुं तोयनिधिं वीरा नैषा वो नैष्ठिकी मतिः
28: नावो न सन्ति सेनाया बहव्यस्तारयितुं तथा
वणिजामुपघातं च कथमस्मदिवधश्चरेत्
29: विस्तीर्णं चैव नः सैन्यं हन्याच्छिद्रेषु वै परः
प्लवोडुपप्रतारश्च नैवात्र मम रोचते

27: śatayojanavistāraṃ na śaktāḥ sarvavānarāḥ
krāntuṃ toyanidhiṃ virā naiṣā vo naiṣṭhikī matiḥ

28: nāvo na santi senāyā bahvyastārayituṃ tathā
vaṇijāmupaghātaṃ ca kathamasmadvidhaścaret

29: vistīrṇaṃ caiva naḥ sainyaṃ hanyācchidreṣu vai paraḥ
plavoḍupapratāraśca naivātra mama rocate

Verse no. 27: "No, oh brave ones! All the monkeys are not capable of leaping over this expanse of one hundred yojanas. Therefore, this cannot be a firm view.

Verse no. 28: There are not enough boats, barges or rafts etc. to bear the weight of this huge army. Besides, the interests of trade should not suffer because of us (vaṇijāmupaghātaṃ)¹.

[Note--¹This verse is a very significant observation by Lord Ram. Imagine from where would so many large numbers of boats, barges, rafts and ships etc. could be gathered at such a short notice? Surely, the monkeys will force fishermen and navy merchants who navigate through this area to give these things to them so that the army could get across. This would definitely annoy these merchants and native fishermen as this move would rob them of their trade and livelihood, which in turn would make them resistant, and will not augur well for the army with a hostile population in its backyard.

Further, there would be a chance of some of them, becoming hostile to the Lord and his army, turning to Ravana for help, and obviously this eventuality would torpedo every planning, even before the army sets its foot in Lanka.]

Verse no. 29: Our army is vast and the enemy will look for weak spots. The idea of leaping, or using boats, does not appeal to me. No, its not practical and feasible.

{Using boats and other means of navigating across the ocean would scatter our soldiers. Similarly, jumping across will also isolate our soldiers, as all of you cannot jump as a single body of soldiers. The enemy would find them an easy target; he can sink such transport means one by one, or kill the individuals as they land one-by-one on the enemy's soil. Since the army would be scattered and not in close-up formation, these proposals would be disastrous.}

30: अहं त्विमं जलनिधिं समारप्स्याम्युपायतः

प्रतिशेष्याम्युपवसन्दर्शयिष्यति मां ततः

31: न चेद्दर्शयिता मार्गं धक्ष्याम्येनमहं ततः

महास्त्रैरप्रतिहतैरत्यग्निपवनोज्ज्वलैः

30: ahaṁ tvimaṁ jalaṇidhiṁ samārapsyāmyupāyataḥ
pratiśeṣyāmyupavasandarśayiṣyati māṁ tataḥ

31: na ceddarśayitā mārgaṁ dhakṣyāmyenamahaṁ tataḥ
mahāstrairapratihatairatyagnipavanojjvalaiḥ

Verse no. 30: I will instead invoke a strategy to deal with this ocean. I shall try to find a peaceful way to prevail upon the ocean to let the army go across. If it agrees, so far so good. If it remains stubborn, then I shall attack this treasure of water (i.e. the ocean) through some means, and force the one who lives below (i.e. the deity of the ocean) to show me a way.

Verse no. 31: If he does not show me a path, I will burn him up with great and unassailable weapons of mine that flame with the fire and the wind. {I will dry it up with my arrows that spew fire. It will boil all the water in the ocean till the last drop evaporates. But first let me try peaceful means.}"

32: इत्युक्त्वा सहसौमित्रिरुपस्पृश्याथ राघवः

प्रतिशिश्ये जलनिधिं विधिवत्कुशसंस्तरे

33: सागरस्तु ततः स्वप्ने दर्शयामास राघवम्

देवो नदनदीभर्ता श्रीमान्यादोगणैर्वृतः

32: ityuktvā sahasaumitrirupasprśyātha rāghavaḥ
pratiśiśye jalaṇidhiṁ vidhivatkuśasaṁstare

33: sāgarastu tataḥ svapne darśayāmāsa rāghavam
devo nadanadībhartā śrīmānyādoganairvṛtaḥ

Verse no. 32: Having said this, Raghava (Lord Ram), along with with Soumitri (Laxman), touched the water politely to do ablutions, and then sat down on a seat of kusha grass before the ocean, the lord of the water, in a posture of prayer and submission¹.

[Note--¹The Lord sat for three days doing meditation and silently praying to the ocean to let him go across. This is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 57.]

Verse no. 33: Then the deity of the ocean, the illustrious lord of the rivers and other water bodies, appeared in a dream before Lord Ram. The deity was surrounded by aquatic creatures who lived in the ocean, and he shone like one of the gods of heaven.

34: कौसल्यामातरित्येवमाभाष्य मधुरं वचः
 इदमित्याह रत्नानामाकरैः शतशो वृतः
 35: ब्रूहि किं ते करोम्यत्र साहाय्यं पुरुषर्षभ
 इक्ष्वाकुरस्मि ते ज्ञातिरिति रामस्तमब्रवीत्
 36: मार्गमिच्छामि सैन्यस्य दत्तं नदनदीपते
 येन गत्वा दशग्रीवं हन्यां पौलस्त्यपांसनम्
 37: यद्येवं याचतो मार्गं न प्रदास्यति मे भवान्
 शरैस्त्वां शोषयिष्यामि दिव्यास्त्रप्रतिमन्त्रितैः

34: kausalyāmātarityevamābhāṣya madhuraṁ vacaḥ
 idamityāha ratnānāmākaraīḥ śataśo vṛtaḥ

35: brūhi kiṁ te karomyatra sāhāyyaṁ puruṣarṣabha
 ikṣvākurasmi te jñātiriti rāmastamabravīt

36: mārgamicchāmi sainyasya dattaṁ nadanadīpate
 yena gatvā daśagrīvaṁ hanyāṁ paulastyapāṁsanam

37: yadyevaṁ yācato mārgaṁ na pradāsyati me bhavān
 śaraistvāṁ śoṣayiṣyāmi divyāstrapratimantritaīḥ

Verse no. 34: The deity had brought along countless gems and precious stones that are found in the ocean (such as corals etc.) as gifts for the Lord. He addressed Lord Ram very politely, saying: "Oh son of Kausalya, I have come to speak to you.

Verse no. 35: Oh noble gentleman and the best amongst men! Tell me what I can do to help you."

Lord Ram replied: "I am of the Ikshvaku lineage, and can therefore be regarded as your relative¹.

[Note--¹Why does Lord Ram call the ocean a relative of his? It is because the sons of one of the ancestors of the Lord, king Sagar, had dug up the ocean, called 'sagar' in the vernacular. The ocean was named 'sagar' after this king.

The legend goes that once king Sagar had done a Aswamedha Yagya (the horse sacrifice), and the horse was stolen by Indra, the jealous king of gods, as he feared that if the sacrifice was successful then king Sagar would usurp his crown of

heaven. As a consequence, the king sent his 60,000 sons to find the horse. These sons had dug up the earth to search for the horse, which was ultimately found in the hermitage of sage Kapil where Indra had hidden it. The sage was accused by them for stealing the horse. This was not the truth, so the sage got angry and cursed them by burning them to ashes. The legend further says that later on king Bhagirath did severe penance to bring down the holy river Ganges so that its holy water could remove this curse and provide salvation to the sons of king Sagar.]

Verse no. 36: Oh the lord of the rivers and streams (nadanadīpate)! I desire that you show me a path for my army so that I can go across and slay Ravana, the ten-headed wicked descendant of the Pulastya lineage.

Verse no. 37: If you do not give me the path that I am asking for, I will dry you up with arrows that have been invoked with mantras to make them fiery celestial weapons."

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 59 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

38: इत्येवं ब्रुवतः श्रुत्वा रामस्य वरुणालयः
 उवाच व्यथितो वाक्यमिति बद्धाञ्जलिः स्थितः
 39: नेच्छामि प्रतिघातं ते नास्मि विघ्नकरस्तव
 शृणु चेदं वचो राम श्रुत्वा कर्तव्यमाचर
 40: यदि दास्यामि ते मार्गं सैन्यस्य व्रजतोऽऽज्ञया
 अन्येऽप्याज्ञापयिष्यन्ति मामेवं धनुषो बलात्
 41: अस्ति त्वत्र नलो नाम वानरः शिल्पिसंमतः
 त्वष्टुर्देवस्य तनयो बलवान्विश्वकर्मणः
 42: स यत्काष्ठं तृणं वापि शिलां वा क्षेप्स्यते मयि
 सर्वं तद्धारयिष्यामि स ते सेतुर्भविष्यति

38: ityevaṃ bruvataḥ śrutvā rāmasya varuṇālayaḥ
 uvāca vyathito vākyaṃ iti baddhāñjaliḥ sthitaḥ

39: necchāmi pratighātaṃ te nāsmi vighnakarastava
 śṛṇu cedam vaco rāma śrutvā kartavyamācara

40: yadi dāsyāmi te mārgaṃ sainyasya vrajato'jñayā
 anye'pyājñāpayiṣyanti mamevaṃ dhanuṣo balāt

41: asti tvatra nalo nāma vānaraḥ śilpisaṃmataḥ
 tvaṣṭurdevasya tanayo balavānviśvakarmaṇaḥ

42: sa yatkāṣṭhaṃ tṛṇaṃ vāpi śilāṃ vā kṣepsyate mayi
 sarvaṃ taddhārayiṣyāmi sa te seturbhaviṣyati

Verse no. 38: On hearing Lord Ram's words, the ocean, which is an abode of Varuna (the patron deity of water), was extremely alarmed and worried. He stood there with the palms of his hands joined in salutation. Then, most humbly and politely, the deity spoke to the Lord as follows:

Verse no. 39: "I do not wish to obstruct you in any manner whatever, or create any obstacle of any kind. Oh great Lord Ram! I humbly pray to you to listen to my words. After hearing me, you can decide on your course of action.

Verse no. 40: If I grant a passage to you so that your army can march across my surface, then please understand the consequences. Others will use this as a precedent to use the strength of their bows to also command me and compel me to give them a right of passage¹.

[Note--¹To wit, oh Lord, if I agree to your request and allow you and your army to cross over my surface easily, then it would set a precedent that would be exploited by others in the future, as then they would think that I am weak and subject to yielding by using threats. So they would threaten me at their own free will, with their bows and arrows pointed at me, and use force to compel me to yield to their demands. It will be very humiliating for me, and go against my dignity and self-respect. Besides, it will also violate Nature's natural boundary that I form between two or more warring communities living apart on different parcels of lands, who would otherwise clash with each other on a regular basis, without any thing to separate them and stand as a natural barrier between warring factions. After all, it was the Creator who had thought of something akin to this for which purpose he created me. But I will tell you a way by which both our purposes would be served--construct a floating bridge on my surface, and I promise you that I will support it and prevent it from sinking. Then in future if someone would force me to give them a passage, I would cite your example and tell them to build a bridge across me if they can, and surely no one would have the necessary wherewithal to do so. And even if someone powerful and resourceful enough would manage to go about this tough task, I can always sink it somewhere, and I have hundreds of excuses to do so. I hope you follow me, oh Lord!]

Verse no. 41: There is a monkey named Nala who is venerated by the community of artisans as an expert builder and architect. He is the powerful and talented son of the god Vishvakarma Tvashtra. {Vishvakarma is the architect and builder of the gods, and is the one who is credited with constructing the infrastructure of this physical world.}

Verse no. 42: I will bear whatever he throws into me—wood, grass, straw or stone, I will firmly hold all of them aloft, and prevent their sinking or floating away. In this way, piece by piece, the whole bridge would take shape. I give my word of honour to you that I would bear the weight of your entire army while it crosses the bridge, and no harm would come their way. {Besides this, oh Lord, this bridge would be a new wonder of the world, and it would establish your fame and glory for all times to come! And I too will rejoice in this glory and fame as being a partner in your success of freeing Sita and freeing the world from the tyranny of the demons.}"

[Note--This practical advise for the construction of a bridge given by the ocean's deity to Lord Ram has been narrated almost varbatim in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 60.

In the meanwhile, it is to be noted here that while this narration in the Mahabharat mentions only Nala by name for the construction of the bridge, but other versions of the Ramayana mention another monkey named Neel also. Neel was a brother of Nala, and the two together acted as chief architects and craftsmen to put together the pieces of tall trees, reeds, grass blades and leaves, as well as huge boulders, rocks and stones brought by countless monkey warriors and dumped on the surface of the ocean to build a strong floating bridge across the surface of water extending to a distance of 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles), connecting the northern shore where Lord Ram's army waited, and the southern shore on the soil of the island of Lanka.]

43: इत्युक्त्वान्तर्हिते तस्मिन्नामो नलमुवाच ह

कुरु सेतुं समुद्रे त्वं शक्तो ह्यसि मतो मम

44: तेनोपायेन काकुत्स्थः सेतुबन्धमकारयत्

दशयोजनविस्तारमायतं शतयोजनम्

45: नलसेतुरिति ख्यातो योऽद्यापि प्रथितो भुवि

रामस्याज्ञां पुरस्कृत्य धार्यते गिरिसंनिभः

43: ityuktvāntarhite tasminrāmo nalamuvāca ha
kuru setuṃ samudre tvam śakto hyasi mato mama

44: tenopāyena kākutsthaḥ setubandhamakārayat
daśayojanavistāramāyataṃ śatayojanam

45: nalaseturiti khyāto yo'dyāpi prathito bhuvi
rāmasyājñāṃ puraskṛtya dhāryate girisaṃnibhaḥ

Verse no. 43: Having said this, the deity of the ocean disappeared from sight.

Then, Lord Ram summoned Nala and instructed him to construct the bridge. The Lord told him: "Oh skillful Nala! Build a bridge across the ocean. It is my firm belief that you are capable of doing this, and I trust you."

Verse no. 44: Through this means, Kakutstha (i.e. Lord Ram) had a bridge constructed. It was ten yojanas wide and a hundred yojanas long. {1 Yojana = 8 miles. Hence, the bridge was 80 miles wide, and about 800 miles long.}

Verse no. 45: Even today, that is famous on earth as Nala's bridge (nalaseturiti khyāto). It was created on Lord Ram's instructions¹, and is established like a mountain (i.e. it is clearly a landmark on the surface of the earth, and stands out like a chain of mountains on the flat surface of water of the ocean).

[Note--¹Lord Ram was so magnanimous in heart, thankful by nature, and charitable in disposition that he honoured Nala by naming the enormous bridge after him. Usually

in today's world, it is the leader, whether a king, a political leader, a great personality, or some nobleman, alive or dead, after whom a monument is named; the actual people who erect that monument and sweat it out in its construction go into oblivion. Not so with Lord Ram: he rewarded this noble effort of Nala by dedicating the bridge in his name, calling it 'Nala's Setu'--or Nala's Bridge!]

46: तत्रस्थं स तु धर्मात्मा समागच्छदिवभीषणः

भ्राता वै राक्षसेन्द्रस्य चतुर्भिः सचिवैः सह

47: प्रतिजग्राह रामस्तं स्वागतेन महामनाः

सुग्रीवस्य तु शङ्काभूत्प्रणिधिः स्यादिति स्म ह

48: राघवस्तस्य चेष्टाभिः सम्यक्च चरितेङ्गितैः

यदा तत्त्वेन तुष्टोऽभूत्तत एनमपूजयत्

49: सर्वराक्षसराज्ये चाप्यभ्यषिञ्चदिवभीषणम्

चक्रे च मन्त्रानुचरं सुहृदं लक्ष्मणस्य च

46: tatrasthaṃ sa tu dharmātmā samāgacchadvibhīṣaṇaḥ
bhrātā vai rākṣasendrasya caturbhiḥ sacivaiḥ saha

47: pratijagrāha rāmastaṃ svāgatena mahāmanāḥ
sugrīvasya tu śaṅkābhūtpṛaṇidhiḥ syāditi sma ha

48: rāghavastasya ceṣṭābhiḥ samyakca cariteṅgitaiḥ
yadā tattvena tuṣṭo'bhūttata enamapūjayat

49: sarvarākṣasarājye cāpyabhyāṣiñcadvibhīṣaṇam
cakre ca mantrānucaraṃ suhrdaṃ lakṣmaṇasya ca

Verse no. 46: Vibhishan, who was the younger brother of Ravana, the mighty and notorious king of the demons, was a pious and noble soul unlike his brother. He decided to shed his sinful environment of Lanka and go and take refuge with Lord Ram who was 'Dharma' personified¹. Deciding thus, Vibhishan went to meet Lord Ram; he was accompanied by four of his close advisors and confidantes.

[Note--¹Lord Ram was a strict follower of Dharma: the principles governing righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, goodness and nobility of thought and conduct. Since Vibhishan had by this time realised that the doom of the evil Ravana was close at hand, he decided that it would be wise to switch sides while there still was time.

This episode of Vibhishan deciding to meet Lord Ram and surrender before him is narrated in all the versions of the Ramayana. Vibhishan meets Lord Ram after the army pitched its camp on the shore of the ocean. He was compelled to leave Ravana after the latter insulted and kicked him in his court when Vibhishan tried to persuade Ravana to stop his hostility towards Lord Ram and return Sita honourably if he wanted to evade complete annihilation and destruction of Lanka. This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40--to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.]

Verse no. 47: Lord Ram, noble as he was in his heart, warmly welcomed Vibhishan. Sugriv, however, had his misgivings that he might be a spy of Ravana².

[Note--²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 43.]

Verse no. 48: But Raghava (Lord Ram) overruled Sugriv's reservations, and intructed that Vibhishan be brought to him. During the interaction, Lord Ram was satisfied about the truth of Vibhishan's integrity and honesty through the latter's actions, gestures and conduct. Hence, the Lord accepted Vibhishan in his fold and showed honours to him³.

[Note--³This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 44--to Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 49.]

Verse no. 49: He (Lord Ram) anointed Vibhishana as the king of the demon race⁴, and made him Laxman's adviser and friend.

[Note--⁴Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.]

50: विभीषणमते चैव सोऽत्यक्रामन्महार्णवम्

ससैन्यः सेतुना तेन मासेनैव नराधिप

51: ततो गत्वा समासाद्य लङ्कोद्यानान्यनेकशः

भेदयामास कपिभिर्महान्ति च बहूनि च

52: तत्रास्तां रावणामात्यौ राक्षसौ शुकसारणौ

चारौ वानररूपेण तौ जग्राह विभीषणः

53: प्रतिपन्नौ यदा रूपं राक्षसं तौ निशाचरौ

दर्शयित्वा ततः सैन्यं रामः पश्चादवासृजत्

54: निवेश्योपवने सैन्यं तच्छूरः प्राज्ञवानरम्

प्रेषयामास दौत्येन रावणस्य ततोऽङ्गदम्

50: vibhīṣaṇamate caiva so'tyakraṁmanmahārṇavam
sasainyaḥ setunā tena māsenaiḥ narādhipa

51: tato gatvā samāsādya laṅkodyānānyanekaśaḥ
bhedayāmāsa kapibhirmahānti ca bahūni ca

52: tatrāstāṁ rāvaṇāmātyau rākṣasau śukasāraṇau
cārau vānararūpeṇa tau jagrāha vibhīṣaṇaḥ

53: pratipannau yadā rūpaṁ rākṣasaṁ tau niśācarau
darśayitvā tataḥ sainyaṁ rāmaḥ paścādavāsṛjat

54: niveśyopavane sainyaṃ tacchūraḥ prājñavānaram
preṣayāmāsa dautyena rāvaṇasya tato'ṅadam

Verse no. 50: Then, on Vibhishan's advice, the Lord (Ram; who was the Lord of Human Beings; literally a king of men, or king amongst men—'narādhipa') crossed the ocean with his army at the end of one month of his arriving on its shore (māsenaiḥ)¹.

[Note--¹The time between Lord Ram's arrival on the northern shore of the ocean and his crossing it over the newly constructed bridge with his army was roughly one month. This also implies that the bridge itself took almost about a month's time to be completed.

Lord Ram's mighty army crossing the ocean on this bridge and landing on the northern coast of Lanka has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 4--to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4.]

Verse no. 51: Then, having reached Lanka, the army found many large gardens which it destroyed².

[Note--¹The army went on the rampage after landing on the soil of Lanka. But one thing stands out starkly here--how come Ravana remained in the dark all through the time the bridge was being constructed and the huge army crossed it to land on the soil of Lanka? It is obvious that Ravana's internal security mechanism had either failed or betrayed him completely. After what Hanuman had done a month earlier, by entering and burning Lanka with impunity, everyone was so terrified that no one dared to oppose the invading forces for fear of their own lives. The citizens wished to sit on the fence and watch which way the tide of war goes--if Ravana has the upper hand, they would cheer him, and if Lord Ram with Vibhishan by his side won, they would change stance and cheer them instead.

Another plausible reason is that by this time Ravana had become stubborn and mad so much that if anyone went to tell him the truth, he would burst out on him and shout at him. He had kicked his own brother Vibhishan and threw him out of the kingdom ignobly, and even Malyawan, his father-in-law, was not spared Ravana's venomous outburst. He had become very irritable, so everyone wished to avoid him.

One other reason is that the inhabitants of Lanka were fed up with Ravana's rule, and they wanted a change. From all available signs, Ravana's future was doomed, and the star of luck seemed to favour Vibhishan. The citizens too liked the latter over his cruel elder brother. Hence, since Vibhishan had joined Lord Ram, and it was obvious to everyone that he would be the next king of Lanka, all favoured this change of guard, and therefore quietly decided to let the invading army enter without obstruction and defeat Ravana and end his autocratic and dictatorial reign marked by reckless whims, cruelty and tyranny.]

Verse no. 52: Ravana had two demon advisers named Shuka and Sarana. They disguised themselves as monkeys and came as spies, but Vibhishana had them caught.

Verse no. 53: When those 'roamers of the night' (niśācara) revealed their real forms of being demons, Lord Ram had then shown mercy on them and had set them free².

[Note--²This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51--to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 57.]

When the spies sent by Ravana after Vibhishan found how Lord Ram had warmly welcomed him, and also how the Lord had set them free even though it was obvious that they were Ravana's spies, they were very impressed. They had a change of heart and submitted to Lord Ram; they went back and sternly rebuked Ravana.

Seen in the context of the observations made as a footnote of verse no. 51 herein above, the picture becomes all the more clear. The news of Lord Ram's friendly and compassionate nature spread like a wild-fire in Lanka. The few who had doubts about him were by now in favour of him. The tide of public opinion seems to have turned against Ravana even before the war actually started.]

Verse no. 54: Having set up the quarters for his army in a grove in the city, the brave Lord Ram sent the wise monkey Angada as his messenger to Ravana.³

[Note--³Lord Ram's advisors suggested that they should send an emissary to Ravana in a last minute effort to find a peaceful end to this issue. They all agreed on sending Angad, as he was wise and well-versed in diplomacy by the virtue of his being a noble prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17--to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.]

Thus ends Canto 267.

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Canto 268:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: प्रभूतान्नोदके तस्मिन्बहुमूलफले वने
सेनां निवेश्य काकुत्स्थो विधिवत्पर्यरक्षत

2: रावणश्च विधिं चक्रे लङ्कायां शास्त्रनिर्मितम्
प्रकृत्यैव दुराधर्षा दृढप्राकारतोरणा

3: अगाधतोयाः परिखा मीननक्रसमाकुलाः
बभूवुः सप्त दुर्धर्षाः खादिरैः शङ्कुभिश्चिताः

4: कर्णाट्यन्त्रदुर्धर्षा बभूवुः सहुडोपलाः
साशीविषघटायोधाः ससर्जरसपांसवः

5: मुसलालातनाराचतोमरासिपरश्वधैः
अन्विताश्च शतघ्नीभिः समधूच्छिष्टमुद्गराः

6: पुरद्वारेषु सर्वेषु गुल्माः स्थावरजङ्गमाः
बभूवुः पत्तिबहुलाः प्रभूतगजवाजिनः

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: prabhūtānnodake tasminbahumūlaphale vane
senām niveśya kākutstho vidhivatparyarakṣata

2: rāvaṇaśca vidhiṃ cakre laṅkāyām śāstranirmitam
prakṛtyaiva durādharṣā dṛḍhaprākāratoraṇā

3: agādhatoyāḥ parikhā mīnanakrasamākulāḥ
babhūvuḥ sapta durdharṣāḥ khādiraiḥ śaṅkubhiścītāḥ

4: karṇāṭṭayantradurdharṣā babhūvuḥ sahuḍopalāḥ
sāśīviṣaghaṭāyodhāḥ sasarjarasapāṃsavah

5: musalālātanārācatomarāsiparaśvadhāḥ
anvitāśca śataghnībhiḥ samadhūcchiṣṭamudgarāḥ

6: puradvāreṣu sarveṣu gulmāḥ sthāvarajaṅgamāḥ
babhūvuḥ pattibahulāḥ prabhūtagajavājīnaḥ

{As narrated in the closing part of the previous canto no. 267, Angad, the prince of the monkeys, was sent by Lord Ram as an emissary to Ravana, the lord of the demons, in a last effort to find a peaceful solution to the issue and avoid a disastrous war. Angad was exceptionally valiant and fearless; he went straight to the court of Ravana and had a heated exchange with the latter. As it happened earlier with Hanuman, Ravana wouldn't listen; he became furious at Angad and ordered his demon soldiers to grab Angad and thrash him. What followed was complete chaos: Angad turned on them violently like Hanuman had done earlier, thereby sending a stern warning to Ravana about the fate that stares him on his face: if he alone can handle a large number of demon soldiers and trample them under foot like straw, imagine what would happen when hundreds and thousands of monkeys like him invade Lanka!

After having demolished Ravana's pride and ego, Angad returned to Lord Ram to report that there was no sense any longer in trying to make Ravana see sense: he is stubborn and determined to have a showdown. So finally, the orders were given to the monkey and bear army to launch the assault on the fort of Lanka. The ferocious army, which had been so eager to raid the fort of Lanka and unleash their ferocity on the demon, now got what it wanted. Wave after wave of the Lord's army dashed towards the fort of Lanka and easily breached the wall of the fort, entered the city, and unleashed havoc, turning everything on which they could lay their hands upon upside down. The demon surely struck back, and were as surely repulsed by the Lord's army. In the hand-to-hand battle that followed, the valorous monkeys and bears began to have an upper hand on their adversaries, the demons. Having demolished the majority of the demon army in physical terms and demoralising them in morale terms, the Lord's army returned to its camp at the end of the day, successful after the day's campaign.}

Verse no. 1: Sage Markandeya continued with his narration: "That forest (where Lord Ram's army camped) was full of countless edible roots and fruits, and had plentiful supply of water. Kakutstha (Lord Ram) made his army pitch camp here and made

appropriate arrangements for its safety. {The Lord appointed guards and watchers to keep a close and vigilant eye on any spy or demon soldiers who might infiltrate their camp secretly while the monkeys and bears relaxed.}

Verse no. 2: Meanwhile, Ravana too made suitable arrangements to protect and fortify the defenses of Lanka as prescribed in texts dealing with warfare and defensive technique. Though Lanka was inherently impenetrable and naturally unassailable with its firm walls and turrets, yet Ravana did not want to take any chance, so he further fortified them.

Verse no. 3: There were seven moats filled with deep water, and infested with fish and crocodiles, surrounding Lanka's fort. While these were in themselves unpassable, still Ravana bolstered the defenses and made these moats impenetrable with sharp stakes made out of khadira wood. {Khadir wood means the Acacia catechu plant in English.}

Verse no. 4: It was difficult to attack Lanka because of catapults and watchtowers, as well as rocks that would be hurled at the invading soldiers with the help of catapults or directly thrown on them when they tried to scale the walls of the fort of Lanka. The demon soldiers had abundance of pots that were full of venomous snakes and powered capsicum or chillies that were meant to blind the invaders and burn them. {Besides huge pots filled with red capsicum powder that would be sprayed on the invaders, Ravana also got pits dug and filled them with poisonous snakes and other dangerous reptiles. These pits were deep and wide, and anyone falling in them had no chance of survival.}

Verse no. 5: The demon soldiers were armed with clubs, fiery arrows, lances, spears, battle-axes, and so on and so forth. There were strongholds provided with additional ballistas, iron balls with spiked surfaces (called śataghniśca), and pointed stakes as added precaution to repulse the attacking army.

Verse no. 6: All the gates to the city were guarded by mobile and stationary posts. There were large numbers of infantry and many horses and elephants.

[Note--The above description of the defenses of Lanka and the arrangements that Ravana had made clearly show that he was prepared for war.]

7: अङ्गदस्त्वथ लङ्काया द्वारदेशमुपागतः

विदितो राक्षसेन्द्रस्य प्रविवेश गतव्यथः

8: मध्ये राक्षसकोटीनां बह्वीनां सुमहाबलः

शुशुभे मेघमालाभिरादित्य इव संवृतः

9: स समासाद्य पौलस्त्यममात्यैरभिसंवृतम्

रामसंदेशमामन्त्र्य वाग्मी वक्तुं प्रचक्रमे

7: aṅgadastvatha laṅkāyā dvāradeśamupāgataḥ
vidito rākṣasendrasya praviveśa gatavyathaḥ

8: madhye rākṣasakoṭīnām bahvīnām sumahābalaḥ
śūśubhe meghamālābhirāditya iva saṁvṛtaḥ

9: sa samāsādyā paulastyamamātyairabhisamvṛtam
rāmasaṁdeśamāmantrya vāgmī vaktum pracakrame

Verse no. 7: Arriving at Lanka's gate, Angada made himself known to Ravana, the lord of the demons, about his arrival and his intent to meet the latter. Thereafter, Angad fearlessly entered Lanka¹.

[Note--¹Angad reached the gates of Lanka and entered it fearlessly like a lion, sending the guards and demon soldiers scurrying for cover. When Ravana was informed, though trembling out of nervousness internally, he kept a brave face outwardly and ordered that Angad be brought before him in his court. This part of the event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18--to Doha no. 19.]

Verse no. 8: Angad shown like a brilliant sun blazing in the sky: his presence in the midst of hundreds and thousands of demon warriors overshadowed their valour and eclipsed the aura of strength, power and invincibility that they were so proud of hitherto. Surrounded on all the sides by the demons, Andad looked like a radiant sun around which swirl banks of thin, white and rainless clouds which are unable to dim the sun's brilliance.

Verse no. 9: Having approached Pulastya (Ravana), who was surrounded by his advisers, the eloquent Angad delivered Lord Ram's message to him².

[Note--²The heated conversation between Angad and Ravana has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 20--to Doha no. 32-a.]

10: आह त्वां राघवो राजन्कोसलेन्द्रो महायशः

प्राप्तकालमिदं वाक्यं तदादत्स्व कुरुष्व च

11: अकृतात्मानमासाद्य राजानमनये रतम्

विनश्यन्त्यनयाविष्टा देशाश्च नगराणि च

12: त्वयैकेनापराद्धं मे सीतामाहरता बलात्

वधायानपराद्धानामन्येषां तद्गविष्यति

13: ये त्वया बलदर्पाभ्यामाविष्टेन वनेचराः

ऋषयो हिंसिताः पूर्वं देवाश्चाप्यवमानिताः

14: राजर्षयश्च निहता रुदन्त्यश्चाहताः स्त्रियः

तदिदं समनुप्राप्तं फलं तस्यानयस्य ते

15: हन्तास्मि त्वां सहामात्यं युध्यस्व पुरुषो भव

पश्य मे धनुषो वीर्यं मानुषस्य निशाचर

16: मुच्यतां जानकी सीता न मे मोक्ष्यसि कर्हिचित्

अराक्षसमिमं लोकं कर्तास्मि निशितैः शरैः

10: āha tvāṃ rāghavo rājankosalendro mahāyaśāḥ
prāptakālamidaṃ vākyam tadādatsva kuruṣva ca

11: akṛtātmānamāsādya rājānāmanaye ratam
vinaśyāntyanayāviṣṭā deśāśca nagarāṇi ca

12: tvayaikenāparāddham me sītāmāharatā balāt
vadhāyānaparāddhānāmanyeshāṃ tadbhaviṣyati

13: ye tvayā baladarpābhyāmāviṣṭena vanecarāḥ
ṛṣayo hiṃsitāḥ pūrvam devāścāpyavamānitāḥ

14: rājarṣayaśca nihatā rudantyaścāhṛtāḥ striyaḥ
tadidaṃ samanuprāptaṃ phalaṃ tasyānayasya te

15: hantāsmi tvāṃ sahāmātyam yudhyasva puruṣo bhava
paśya me dhanuṣo vīryam mānuṣasya niśācara

16: mucyatām jānakī sītā na me mokṣyasi karhicit
arākṣasamimam lokaṃ kartāsmi niśitaiḥ śaraiḥ

Verse no. 10: Angad told Ravana: "Oh king! The immensely famous and illustrious Lord of Kouhala, known as Raghava (Lord Ram), who is amongst men as Indra is amidst the gods in heaven, has sent you timely words that are appropriate to the occasion. Listen to them and act accordingly.

Verse no. 11: 'Countries and cities that have kings who indulge in unrighteous acts and reckless behaviour, whose acts are injurious and harmful to others, then these kings and their lands and cities fall to ruin, and are, one day or the other, destroyed.

Verse no. 12: You alone are guilty of forcibly abducting Sita. But this evil deed of yours will lead to the destruction and doom of others who are otherwise innocent.

Verse no. 13: Intoxicated by your strength and overcome by pride and arrogance, you have earlier harmed many rishis (sages) who lived in the forest, and have you have insulted the gods by your insolent and rude behaviour.

Verse no. 14: You have killed royal sages and abducted their weeping wives. The time has now come for the fruits of your evil deeds to be reaped by you. {To wit, now the consequences and punishments for the sins you have been committing with impunity have finally come to haunt you. As the saying goes, 'one reaps what one sows', your harvest of sins has ripened, and you are now at the end of the road.}

Verse no. 15: I will slay you along with your advisers and ministers. Be manly on the field of battle, and show your valour there. Oh stalker of the night! Though I am a mere human, you will witness the valour of my bow. {To wit, don't run away from the battle-field now. I challenge you. Till now you had thought that there is no one who would dare to challenge you, and this erroneous belief had gone into your head, making you too proud, arrogant, insolent, and over-confident of about yourself and your abilities. But, as the saying goes, 'a camel knows how tall it is when it comes near a hill, not to mention a mountain', the time for your reckoning has finally arrived. I will teach you a lesson of your life that your generations of demons won't forget. }

Verse no. 16: If you still want some reprieve and wish to find an escape route from the doom that you certainly face, then it will be wise for you to free Sita (Janaki) immediately. If you do not release her, then I will use my sharp arrows to get rid of you and free the world of the tyranny of you demons.'

17: इति तस्य ब्रुवाणस्य दूतस्य परुषं वचः
 श्रुत्वा न ममृषे राजा रावणः क्रोधमूर्छितः
 18: इङ्गितज्ञास्ततो भर्तुश्चत्वारो रजनीचराः
 चतुर्ष्वङ्गेषु जगृहुः शार्दूलमिव पक्षिणः
 19: तांस्तथाङ्गेषु संसक्तानङ्गदो रजनीचरान्
 आदायैव खमुत्पत्य प्रासादतलमाविशत्
 20: वेगेनोत्पततस्तस्य पेतुस्ते रजनीचराः
 भुवि संभिन्नहृदयाः प्रहारपरिपीडिताः
 21: स मुक्तो हर्म्यशिखरात्तस्मात्पुनरवापतत्
 लङ्घयित्वा पुरीं लङ्कां स्वबलस्य समीपतः
 22: कोसलेन्द्रमथाभ्येत्य सर्वमावेद्य चाङ्गदः
 विश्राम स तेजस्वी राघवेणाभिनन्दितः

17: iti tasya bruvāṇasya dūtasya paruṣaṃ vacaḥ
 śrutvā na mamṛṣe rājā rāvaṇaḥ krodhamūrchitaḥ

18: iṅgitajñāstato bhartuścatvāro rajanīcarāḥ
 caturṣvaṅgeṣu jagṛhuḥ śārdūlamiva pakṣiṇaḥ

19: tāṃstathāṅgeṣu saṃsaktānaṅgado rajanīcarān
 ādāyaiva khamutpatya prāsādataḥamāviśat

20: vegenotpatatastasya petuste rajanīcarāḥ
 bhuvī sambhinnahṛdayāḥ prahāraparipīḍitāḥ

21: sa mukto harmyaśikharāttasmātpunaravāpatat
 laṅghayitvā purīm laṅkāṃ svabalasya samīpataḥ

22: kosalendramathābhyetya sarvamāvedya cāṅgadah
viśaśrāma sa tejasvī rāghaveṇābhinanditaḥ

Verse no. 17: Hearing the harsh and blunt words of the messenger (Angad), Ravana, the lord of the demons, could not tolerate them, and he became furious with rage.

Verse no. 18: At the signs of their lord Ravana, four mighty demons seized Angad by his four limbs and clung to them like birds attempting to ground a tiger by clinging to the latter's four limbs.

Verse no. 19: Angada, however, was undeterred by it; he leapt up onto a terrace of the palace with the demons (literally the roamers of the night--'rajanīcarān') hanging onto his limbs.

Verse no. 20: The force of his jump was so violent that it made the demons, who roamed during the night (which was a characteristic feature of the demons that gave them the epithet of being 'rajnīcara', i.e. those who moved around during the dark hours of the night), fell down on the ground due to the shockwaves, with their hearts palpating violently from the blow.

Verse no. 21: He again leapt and descended from the top of the palace. He jumped over the city of Lanka and returned to his companions in the monkey army waiting outside the ramparts of the fort of Lanka.

Verse no. 22: The energetic monkey then went to Lord Ram, the Lord of Kosala, and told him everything¹. The Lord honoured Angad and praised him for his valour, fearlessness and courage. After that, Angad rested for a while.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35-a.]

{The following passages describe the ferocious war between the mighty forces of Lord Ram on one side, and an equally mighty force of Ravana on the other side. The assault by the enthusiastic monkeys and bears on Lanka was so fierce and powerful that the demon army started wilting very soon. There was complete chaos and mayhem in the rank and file of the demon army as the city of Lanka bore the brunt of the war with waves after waves of monkeys demolishing its buildings, parks etc., reducing to rubble whatever had remained of the city after it was burnt by Hanuman earlier. By the end of the day, the demons were completely routed and demoralised, while the army of Lord Ram registered a resounding victory and returned jubilantly to their base camp.}

23: ततः सर्वाभिसारेण हरीणां वातरंहसाम्

भेदयामास लङ्कायाः प्राकारं रघुनन्दनः

24: विभीषणक्षीधिपती पुरस्कृत्याथ लक्ष्मणः

दक्षिणं नगरद्वारमवामृदनादुरासदम्

25: करभारुणगात्राणां हरीणां युद्धशालिनाम्
कोटीशतसहस्रेण लङ्कामभ्यपतत्तदा

23: tataḥ sarvābhisāreṇa harīṇāṃ vātaramhasām
bhedayāmāsa laṅkāyāḥ prākāraṃ raghunandanah

24: vibhīṣaṇarkṣādhipatī puraskṛtyātha lakṣmaṇah
dakṣiṇaṃ nagaradvāramavāmṛdnāddurāsadam

25: karabhāruṇagātrāṇāṃ harīṇāṃ yuddhaśālinām
koṭīśatasahasreṇa laṅkāmaḥyapatattadā

Verse no. 23: Then Lord Ram, who was a descendant of the lineage of king Raghu (raghunandanah), ordered that the assault be launched without delay. On his command, all the monkeys, who were as swift, agile and powerful as the wind, moved forward and soon breached the walls of Lanka.

[Note--¹The first wave of assault by the monkey army that sent the demon warriors scampering for cover and caused havoc amongst their rank and file has also been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39--to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42.]

Verse no. 24: With Laxman leading the way, Vibhishan and Jamvant, the lord of the bears, demolished the impregnable southern gate of the city².

[Note--²To wit, the first detachment of the monkey army that broke through the gate of Lanka on the southern side and entered the city was lead by Laxman, Vibhishan and Jamvant. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 39. The only difference between the narrative of Ram Charit Manas and our present narration in Ramopakhyān of Mahabharat is that while in the former the leaders were Laxman, Sugriv and Jamvant, while in the present narration they were Laxman, Vibhishan and Jamvant.]

Verse no. 25: Once the walls were breached, the rest of the Lord's army poured in without resistance. The commanders (Laxman and his companions) invaded Lanka with a vast army consisting of a hundred thousand crore of monkey soldiers. They were skilled in battle, and their complexions were as red as that of young camels. {This number of 'a hundred thousand crore' is figuratively speaking, simply meaning that there was no count of the huge number of monkeys and bears that flooded into Lanka as part of Lord Ram's army.}

26: उत्पतद्भिः पतद्भिश्च निपतद्भिश्च वानरैः

नादृश्यत तदा सूर्यो रजसा नाशितप्रभः

27: शालिप्रसूनसदृशैः शिरीषकुसुमप्रभैः

तरुणादित्यसदृशैः शरगौरैश्च वानरैः

28: प्राकारं ददृशुस्ते तु समन्तात्कपिलीकृतम्

राक्षसा विस्मिता राजन्सस्त्रीवृद्धाः समन्ततः

29: बिभिदुस्ते मणिस्तम्भान्कर्णाद्वशिखराणि च

भग्नोन्मथितवेगानि यन्त्राणि च विचिक्षिपुः

30: परिगृह्य शतघ्नीश्च सचक्राः सहोडोपलाः

चिक्षिपुर्भुजवेगेन लङ्कामध्ये महाबलाः

26: utpatadbhiḥ patadbhiśca nipatadbhiśca vānaraiḥ
nādr̥śyata tadā sūryo rajasā nāśitaprabhaḥ

27: śālīprasūnasadr̥śaiḥ śirīṣakusumaprabhaiḥ
taruṇādityasadr̥śaiḥ śaragauraiśca vānaraiḥ

28: prākāraṁ dadr̥śuste tu samantātkapilikṛtam
rākṣasā vismitā rājansastrīvr̥ddhāḥ samantataḥ

29: bibhiduste maṇistambhāṅkarṇāṭṭaśikharāṇi ca
bhagnonmathitavegāni yantrāṇi ca vicikṣipuh

30: parigr̥hya śataghñīśca sacakrāḥ sahoḍopalāḥ
cikṣipurbhujavegena laṅkāmadhye mahābalāḥ

Verse no. 26: The monkeys leapt up and jumped down and moved sideways in huge numbers. As a result of this, large clouds of dust was raised that obscured the sun and dimmed its light.

Verse no. 27: The large number of enthusiastic monkeys looked like ripe paddy stalks swaying to and fro in the morning under the bright light of the rising sun. Their faces looked like blooming flowers of the shirisha tree¹. The surging army of Lord Ram covered every inch of the rampart and the inner areas of the fort of Lanka.

[Note--¹The 'shirisha' tree and its flowers--refer for details to verse no. 10 of Canto 267 earlier.]

Verse no. 28: With the monkeys teeming everywhere on the wall of Lanka, on the top and on the side, the wall itself became invisible; it seemed that the wall was made of nothing but a huge mass of monkey warriors standing one on the top of the other packed in close formation, thereby giving the impression that the wall had assumed the colour of the body of the monkeys-- just like a tree trunk that is covered all around by creepers, thereby losing its own distinguishing colour and assuming the colour of the creepers.

Oh king (Yudhisthira)! In every direction, the demons, along with their wives and elders, were amazed at this spectacle; they stood mesmerised and dazed at what they were seeing before their own eyes.

Verse no. 29: The ferocious army of Lord Ram then went on the rampage, destroying the pillars of buildings that were studded with jewels, as well as the turrets of the

catapults. They shattered, broke and flung away the war implements of the demon army.

Verse no. 30: With great strength, they grasped the shataghnis (spiked iron balls), chakras (sharp razor-like serrated iron discs), iron bars and rocks, and with the force of their arms, they hurled them into the heart (center) of Lanka.

31: प्राकारस्थाश्च ये केचिन्निशाचरगणास्तदा

प्रदुद्रुवुस्ते शतशः कपिभिः समभिद्रुताः

32: ततस्तु राजवचनाद्राक्षसाः कामरूपिणः

निर्ययुर्विकृताकाराः सहस्रशतसंघशः

33: शस्त्रवर्षाणि वर्षन्तो द्रावयन्तो वनौकसः

प्राकारं शोधयन्तस्ते परं विक्रममास्थिताः

34: स माषराशिसदृशैर्बभूव क्षणदाचरैः

कृतो निर्वानरो भूयः प्राकारो भीमदर्शनैः

35: पेतुः शूलविभिन्नाङ्गा बहवो वानरर्षभाः

स्तम्भतोरणभग्नाश्च पेतुस्तत्र निशाचराः

31: prākārasthāśca ye kecinnīśācaragaṇāstadā
pradudruvuste śataśaḥ kapibhiḥ samabhidrutāḥ

32: tatastu rājavacanādrākṣasāḥ kāmārūpiṇaḥ
niryayurvikṛtākārāḥ sahasraśatasamghaśaḥ

33: śastravarṣāṇi varṣanto drāvayanto vanaukaśaḥ
prākāraṃ śodhayantaste paraṃ vikramamāsthitāḥ

34: sa māṣarāśīsadr̥śairbabhūva kṣaṇadācaraiḥ
kṛto nirvānaro bhūyaḥ prākāro bhīmadarśanaiḥ

35: petuḥ śūlavibhinnāṅgā bahavo vānaraṣabhāḥ
stambhatoraṇabhagnāśca petustatra niśācarāḥ

Verse no. 31: Attacked by hundreds of monkeys, the masses of demons who were stationed on the turrets, ramparts and other parts of the wall of the fort, ran away helter-skelter in terror, pursued by the invading monkey warriors.

Verse no. 32: Then, on the instructions of their king Ravana, hundreds and thousands of demon soldiers gathered courage and dashed out to repulse the invading army¹. They could assume any form at will, and their shapes were most fearsome.

[Note--¹After the initial shock and setback, the demons recovered. Ordered by their king Ravana who was shacking with anger at the demon soldiers' unprecedented act of retreat, they gathered courage and dashed forward furiously towards the invading

monkey army, giving the latter a mighty push-back. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 42--to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.]

Verse no. 33: With a shower of arrows and other weapons, they drove away the forest dwellers (i.e. the monkeys; 'vanaukasah'). Resorting to supreme valour, they cleared the wall of the fort of the monkey warriors, and re-established themselves on it.

Verse no. 34: Those terrible-looking demons, who were universally called 'the stalkers of the night (niśācarāḥ)' cleared the walls of the monkeys very swiftly, and hung on there, like masses of flesh strung on a string.

Verse no. 35: Pierced by lances, many brave monkeys, who were as strong as bulls in their race (vānararṣabhāḥ), fell down. In the melee that followed, many stalkers of the night (demons; niśācarāḥ) also fell down, crushed by broken pillars and crumbling ramparts.

36: केशाकेश्यभवद्युद्धं रक्षसां वानरैः सह
नखैर्दन्तैश्च वीराणां खादतां वै परस्परम्
37: निष्टनन्तो ह्युभयतस्तत्र वानरराक्षसाः
हता निपतिता भूमौ न मुञ्चन्ति परस्परम्
38: रामस्तु शरजालानि ववर्ष जलदो यथा
तानि लङ्कां समासाद्य जघ्नुस्तान्नजनीचरान्
39: सौमित्रिरपि नाराचैर्दधन्वा जितक्लमः
आदिश्यादिश्य दुर्गस्थान्पातयामास राक्षसान्
40: ततः प्रत्यवहारोऽभूत्सैन्यानां राघवाज्ञया
कृते विमर्दे लङ्कायां लब्धलक्षो जयोत्तरः

36: keśākeśyabhavadyuddham rakṣasāṃ vānaraiḥ saha
nakhairdantaiśca vīrāṇāṃ khādatāṃ vai parasparam

37: niṣṭananto hyubhayatastatra vānararākṣasāḥ
hatā nipatitā bhūmau na muñcanti parasparam

38: rāmastu śarajālāni vavarṣa jalado yathā
tāni laṅkāṃ samāsādyajaghñustānrajanīcarān

39: saumitrirapi nārācairdṛḍhadhanvā jitaklamah
ādiśyādiśya durgasthānpātayāmāsa rākṣasān

40: tataḥ pratyavahāro'bhūtsainyānāṃ rāghavājñayā
krte vimarde laṅkāyāṃ labdhalakṣo jayottarah

Verse no. 36: Thus the battle raged on between the demons and the monkeys, as the brave ones pulled each other by the hair, fighting and tearing at each other with their nails and teeth (in what was obviously a hand-to-hand close combat).

Verse no. 37: The monkeys and the demons struck each other violently and relentlessly, died and fell down on the ground here and there everywhere, but they did not let go of each other.

Verse no. 38: Meanwhile, Lord Ram shot powerful arrows that rained down on Lanka in the form of a net of hail descending from the clouds, killing demon soldiers in large numbers.

Verse no. 39: Laxman, undaunted by fatigue and determined to defeat the enemy, too relentlessly shot waves after waves of arrows at the demon formations. He targeted the demons stationed at strategic positions of the fort, felling them with precision.

[Note--The arrows shot by Lord Ram from outside the wall of the fort of Lanka were like missiles launched from a distance beyond visible range by ground launchers in modern warfare, while those shot by Laxman were like shoulder-held missiles shot at close range. The 'net of arrows' reminds one of the missiles with multiple warheads meant for a large number of enemy targets. Further, all such arrows were 'precise', similar to precision munition of modern times.]

Verse no. 40: With Lanka breached and the objective towards victory having been attained, Lord Ram's victorious army withdrew for the day on receiving instructions from the Lord."

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 45.]

Thus ends Canto 268.

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Canto 269:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततो निविशमानांस्तान्सैनिकान्नावणानुगाः

अभिजग्मर्गणानेके पिशाचक्षुद्ररक्षसाम्

2: पर्वणः पूतनो जम्भः खरः क्रोधवशो हरिः

प्ररुजश्चारुजश्चैव प्रघसश्चैवमादयः

3: ततोऽभिपततां तेषामदृश्यानां दुरात्मनाम्

अन्तर्धानवधं तज्जश्चकार स विभीषणः

4: ते दृश्यमाना हरिभिर्बलिभिर्दूरपातिभिः

निहताः सर्वशो राजन्महीं जग्मर्गतासवः

5: अमृष्यमाणः सबलो रावणो निर्ययावथ
व्यूह्य चौशनसं व्यूहं हरीन्सर्वानहारयत्

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tato niviśamānāmstānsainikānrāvaṇānugāḥ
abhijagmurgaṇāneke piśācakaṣṭhadrarakṣasām

2: parvaṇaḥ pūtano jambhaḥ kharaḥ krodhavaśo hariḥ
prarujaścārujaścaiva praghasaścaivamādayaḥ

3: tato'bhipatatām teṣāmadṛśyānām durātmanām
antardhānavadham tajjñāścakāra sa vibhīṣaṇaḥ

4: te dṛśyamānā haribhirbalibhirdūrapātibhiḥ
nihatāḥ sarvaśo rājanmahīm jagmurgatāsavaḥ

5: amṛṣyamāṇaḥ sabalo rāvaṇo nirayāvatha
vyūhya cauśanasam vyūham harīnsarvānahārayat

{The following passage narrated by sage Markandeya to king Yudishthira continues with the description of the epic war between the armies of Lord Ram and Ravana. It vividly describes the fierce battle between the two forces, highlighting the intense one-on-one confrontations, and the devastating impact of the powerful weapons used by both sides. The passage opens with the demon army pursuing the monkey army after the latter retired to their camp at the end of the day's battle. The demons, true to their name as 'stalkers of the night', were invisible to Lord Ram's army when they came out of the fort and attacked the latter on the sly. But their design was foiled by Vibhishan who, well aware of the tactics employed by the demons as he himself was a member of that race by the virtue of his being a brother of Ravana, alerted the monkey army. In the ensuing close hand-to-hand battle, the monkeys trashed the demons and killed them.

Unable to tolerate this debacle, Ravana decided to personally take charge of the assault the next day. He gathered his forces and clashed directly with Lord Ram. Meanwhile, Laxman confronted Indrajit, also known as Meghanad, the son of Ravana. Weapons of all sorts and denominations were used in the battle-field like they were never done before.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "When the soldiers of Lord Ram had retired for the day to their camps, some groups of Ravana's followers, the senior demons and their junior partners, called the pishachas and rakshasas respectively, attacked them surreptitiously.

Verse no. 2: Some of them were Parvana, Putana, Jambha, Khara, Krodhavasha, Hari, Praruja, Aruja, Praghhasa, among others.

Verse no. 3: Remaining invisible, those evil and wicked demons entered Lord Ram's camp on the sly. However, Vibhishan came to know of them and removed their powers of invisibility¹.

[Note--¹This is because Vibhishan was also a prince of the demon race. He was well acquainted by the tricks of the trade employed by the demons. He also knew how to deal with it, and how to negate the veil of invisibility spun around themselves by the demons and expose them. So, as soon as he spotted these intruders quietly entering Lord Ram's camp, he immediately used his powers to reveal their identities and made them come out in the open.]

Verse no. 4: Oh king (Yudhisthira)! Once their veil of invisibility was gone, the monkey soldiers jumped up and decimated them forthwith. These monkeys were accustomed to jumping and leaping long distances, so when they discovered that their enemy was trying dirty tricks on them (by becoming invisible and attacking them deceitfully), they became furious. They pounced on the demons and fell all of them on the ground.

Verse no. 5: Unable to tolerate this debacle, Ravana marched out personally with his army. He erected a battle formation known as ushanas ('uśanasam vyūham'; or the 'Shukra' formation as taught by Shukracharaya, the teacher of the demon race)¹, and attacked the monkeys.

[Note--¹The word 'Ushana' refers to a spiritual master who is believed to be the deity of war of the demon race. He was extremely intelligent, far-seeing and prudent in every way. The word also means 'eager, passionate and zealous about a given task'. Hence, in the present context it means that Ravana collected all the demons who were extremely devoted and loyal to him, and were eager to obey his orders. These demon soldiers had suffered at the hands of the monkeys as their family members had been killed and their homes destroyed. So they had become ruthless and passionate about the cause of defeating and punishing the invading army of monkeys and bears. They had the raring, the determination and the dare-devilry needed for a do-or-die battle. Ravana was sure that they would not run away or betray him.

The word 'Ushana' is also interpreted as meaning 'Shukra', the teacher of the demon race in ancient Puranic tradition. Hence, from a broader perspective, and taking into consideration that there are a lot of variations in different Purans, both Ushana and Shukra are supposed to be the same learned person who was the teacher and advisor of the demon race, or the race opposed to goodness, righteousness, probity and propriety, and more inclined to evil, wicked, selfish and antisocial ways.]

6: राघवस्त्वभिनिर्णय व्यूढानीकं दशाननम्

बार्हस्पत्यं विधिं कृत्वा प्रत्यव्यूहन्निशाचरम्

7: समेत्य युयुधे तत्र ततो रामेण रावणः

युयुधे लक्ष्मणश्चैव तथैवेन्द्रजिता सह

8: विरूपाक्षेण सुग्रीवस्तारेण च निखर्वटः

तुण्डेन च नलस्तत्र पटुशः पनसेन च

6: rāghavastvabhiniṛyāya vyūḍhānīkaṃ daśānanam
bārhaspatyaṃ vidhiṃ kṛtvā pratyavyūhanniśācaram

7: sametya yuyudhe tatra tato rāmeṇa rāvaṇaḥ
yuyudhe lakṣmaṇaścaiva tathaivendrajitā saha

8: virūpākṣeṇa sugrīvastāreṇa ca nikharvaṭaḥ
tuṇḍena ca nalastatra paṭuśaḥ panasena ca

Verse no. 6: On seeing Dashanana's ('daśānanam'; Ravana, the ten-headed one) army advance, Raghava (Lord Ram) also emerged and attacked the 'stalker of the night' ('niśācaram'; i.e. Ravana). Lord Ram employed a battle formation that was recommended by Brihaspati (the teacher and guide of the gods; 'bārhaspatyaṃ vidhiṃ').

Verse no. 7: A battle then started between Lord Ram and Ravana. Meanwhile, Laxman fought with Indrajit (also known as Meghanad, the son of Ravana).

[Note--The fierce battle between Lord Ram and Ravana has been described vividly in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 78--to Doha no. 79; (ii) Doha no. 81--to Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 82; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86--to Doha no. 98; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 100--to Doha no. 102.

Similarly, the battle between Laxman and Indrajit has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 54, and (ii) Doha no. 72--to Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 76.]

Verse no. 8: Sugriva fought with Virupaksha, Nikharvata engaged Taar, Nala confronted Tunda, and Patusha fought with Panasa.

9: विषहयं यं हि यो मेने स स तेन समेयिवान्

युयुधे युद्धवेलायां स्वबाहुबलमाश्रितः

10: स संप्रहारो ववृधे भीरूणां भयवर्धनः

लोमसंहर्षणो घोरः पुरा देवासुरे यथा

9: viṣahyaṃ yaṃ hi yo mene sa sa tena sameyivān
yuyudhe yuddhavelāyāṃ svabāhubalamāśritaḥ

10: sa saṃprahāro vavṛdhe bhīrūṇāṃ bhayavardhanaḥ
lomasamharṣaṇo ghoraḥ purā devāsura yathā

Verse no. 9: On that field of battle, using the strength of one's arms, everyone fought with another whom he considered to be a match.

Verse no. 10: That terrible battle made one's body hair stand up. It was like the ancient battle fought between the gods and the asuras. It kept on extending in ferocity, with no end in sight, thereby increasing the fear of those who were cowards.

11: रावणो राममानछच्छक्तिशूलासिवृष्टिभिः

निशितैरायसैस्तीक्ष्णै रावणं चापि राघवः

12: तथैवेन्द्रजितं यत्तं लक्ष्मणो मर्मभेदिभिः

इन्द्रजिच्यापि सौमित्रिं बिभेद बहुभिः शरैः

13: विभीषणः प्रहस्तं च प्रहस्तश्च विभीषणम्

खगपत्रैः शरैस्तीक्ष्णैरभ्यवर्षद्गतव्यथः

14: तेषां बलवतामासीन्महास्त्राणां समागमः

विव्यथुः सकला येन त्रयो लोकाश्चराचराः

11: rāvaṇo rāmamānarchacchaktiśūlāsivrṣṭibhiḥ
niśitairāyasaistīkṣṇai rāvaṇaṃ cāpi rāghavaḥ

12: tathaivendrajitaṃ yattaṃ lakṣmaṇo marmabhedibhiḥ
indrajiccāpi saumitriṃ bibheda bahubhiḥ śaraiḥ

13: vibhīṣaṇaḥ prahastaṃ ca prahastaśca vibhīṣaṇam
khagapatraiḥ śaraistīkṣṇairabhyavarṣadgatavyathaḥ

14: teṣāṃ balavatāmāsīnmahāstrāṇāṃ samāgamaḥ
vivvyathuḥ sakalā yena trayo lokāścarācarāḥ

Verse no. 11: Ravana attacked Lord Ram with a shower of spears, lances and swords. In turn, Lord Ram attacked Ravana with sharp iron arrows.

Verse no. 12: In a similar way, Laxman pierced Indrajit's heart with precision. Indrajit retaliated by wounding Laxman with many arrows.

Verse no. 13: Without hesitation, Vibhishan discharged a volley of arrows at Prahasta, and Prahasta at Vibhishan. They exchanged showers of sharp arrows that had the plumes of birds on the shafts, neither of them showing any sign of retreat.

Verse no. 14: The clash of these mighty warriors wielding powerful celestial weapons shook the entire universe, including all the three worlds with their movable and immovable beings (such living beings who were members of the zoological kingdom, and those who were members of the plant kingdom respectively)."

Thus ends Canto 269.

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Canto 270:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततः प्रहस्तः सहसा समभ्येत्य विभीषणम्

गदया ताडयामास विनद्य रणकर्कशः

2: स तयाभिहतो धीमान्गदया भीमवेगया

नाकम्पत महाबाहुर्हिमवानिव सुस्थिरः

3: ततः प्रगृह्य विपुलां शतघण्टां विभीषणः

अभिमन्त्र्य महाशक्तिं चिक्षेपास्य शिरः प्रति

4: पतन्त्या स तया वेगाद्राक्षसोऽशनिनादया

हृतोत्तमाङ्गो ददृशे वातरुग्ण इव द्रुमः

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tataḥ prahastāḥ sahasā samabhyetya vibhīṣaṇam
gadayā tāḍayāmāsa vinadya raṇakarkaśaḥ

2: sa tayābhihato dhīmāṅgadayā bhīmavegayā
nākampata mahābāhurhimavāniva susthiraḥ

3: tataḥ pragṛhya vipulāṃ śataghaṇṭāṃ vibhīṣaṇaḥ
abhimantrya mahāśaktiṃ cikṣepāśya śiraḥ prati

4: patantyā sa tayā vegādrākṣaso'śaninādayā
hṛtottamāṅgo dadṛśe vātarugṇa iva drumah

{Sage Markandeya continued with his narration of the fierce war between the armies of Lord Ram and Ravana. The canto opens with a duel between Vibhishan and Prahasta during which they bashed each other violently before the latter was slayed by the former. The next senior demon commander on the battle-field was Dhumraksha. A no-holds barred battle raged between the demons led by him, and the monkeys led by Hanuman. Finally, he too was killed. When Ravana heard of the death of his two renowned and powerful warriors (Prahasta and Dhumraksha), he decided that now it was the time for Kumbhakarna, his brother, to take charge of the battle-field. He woke up Kumbhakarna from his deep slumber (he was known to sleep for six months at a time), and briefed him about the developments, asking him to rise up and save the honour of the demon race at a crucial phase when all the major demon warriors have been killed and the demon army seemed to be demoralised. Kumbhakarna agreed and led his forces to the battle-field located on the outskirts of the main city of Lanka, thus bringing us to the end of this canto.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "Then Prahasta suddenly rushed at Vibhishan. He was harsh in battle and struck the latter viciously with a mace.

Verse no. 2: Though struck by the mace with a terrible force, the intelligent and mighty-armed Vibhishan took the blow in his stride. He did not stagger or swoon, but stood firm like the mountains of the Himalayas.

Verse no. 3: Then Vibhishan, in his turn, grasped a large and massive spear that had a hundred bells attached to it. Invoking it with a mantras, he flung it at the head of his opponent Prahasta.

Verse no. 4: With the speed and force of the vajra (the infallible weapon of Indra, the king of gods), it descended with great force and sliced off the head of the demon (Prahasta). He was seen to sway and fall down like a tree that has been struck by the force of the wind during a fierce storm. {Or it can be said that Prahasta fell down like a tree struck by a thunderbolt during a storm.}

5: तं दृष्ट्वा निहतं संख्ये प्रहस्तं क्षणदाचरम्

अभिदुद्राव धूमाक्षो वेगेन महता कपीन्

6: तस्य मेघोपमं सैन्यमापतद्भीमदर्शनम्

दृष्ट्वैव सहसा दीर्णा रणे वानरपुंगवाः

7: ततस्तान्सहसा दीर्णान्दृष्ट्वा वानरपुंगवान्

निर्याय कपिशार्दूलो हनूमान्पर्यवस्थितः

5: taṁ dr̥ṣṭvā nihataṁ saṁkhye prahastaṁ kṣaṇadācaram
abhidudrāva dhūmrākṣo vegena mahatā kapīn

6: tasya meghopamaṁ sainyaṁāpatadbhīmadarśanam
dr̥ṣṭvaiva sahasā dīrṇā raṇe vānarapuṁgavāḥ

7: tatastānsahasā dīrṇāndr̥ṣṭvā vānarapuṁgavān
niryāya kapiśārdūlo hanūmānparyavasthitaḥ

Verse no. 5: On seeing the demon commander Prahasta killed in battle, another powerful demon commander named Dhumraksha charged furiously towards the monkeys with great speed.

Verse no. 6: On seeing him and his terrible demon army dashing forward speedily like the dark clouds of doomsday rushing swiftly in the sky towards their destination to unleash havoc and mayhem, all the powerful and strong monkey warriors, who were like bulls in their race, suddenly lost courage and felt so terrified in their hearts that they began to scatter in the battle-field.

Verse no. 7: When Hanuman, who was like a tiger in the race of monkeys, observed that the other brave monkey warriors, who themselves were as strong and powerful as bulls, have lost courage and were feeling disheartened and dismayed, he rallied them, encouraging and motivating them with his fiery battle-cry, telling them to pick up courage and live up to their formidable reputation as being fearless, invincible and determined in the battle-field in the face of an enemy's advance, no matter how strong and powerful their adversary might be. As a result of this, the monkey army regained its confidence and rallied around Hanuman very quickly.

8: तं दृष्ट्वावस्थितं संख्ये हरयः पवनात्मजम्
वेगेन महता राजन्संन्यवर्तन्त सर्वशः

9: ततः शब्दो महानासीत्तुमुलो लोमहर्षणः
रामरावणसैन्यानामन्योन्यमभिधावताम्

10: तस्मिन्प्रवृत्ते संग्रामे घोरे रुधिरकर्दमे
धूम्राक्षः कपिसैन्यं तद्द्रावयामास पत्रिभिः

8: taṁ dr̥ṣṭvāvasthitaṁ saṁkhye harayaḥ pavanātmajam
vegena mahatā rājansaṁnyavartanta sarvaśaḥ

9: tataḥ śabdo mahānāsīttumulo lomaharṣaṇaḥ
rāmarāvaṇasaīnyānāmanyonyamabhidhāvatām

10: tasminpravṛtte saṁgrāme ghore rudhirakardame
dhūmrākṣaḥ kapisainyaṁ taddrāvayāmāsa patribhiḥ

Verse no. 8: [Addressing Yudhishthira, sage Markandeya continued—] ‘Oh king¹! On seeing that the son of the wind god was firmly established in battle and leading them from the front, all the monkeys swiftly returned to the battle-field (from which they had fled out of fear).

[Note—¹Let us always remember that the story of the Ramayana as described in the Mahabharata in the form of 'Ramopakhyana' of Book 3 known as the Van Parva or the Aranya Parva, is being narrated by sage Markandeya to Yudhishthira, the Pandava prince. So therefore, the word ‘king’ here and other places refer to Yudhishthira who is listening to the story as told by Markandeya.]

Verse no. 9: There arose a great and tumultuous roar that made the body-hair stand up on its edge. The soldiers of Lord Ram and Ravana rushed at each other fiercely.

Verse no. 10: In that terrible and no-holds-barred battle that followed, and which made the ground slushy and muddy with blood, the demon named Dhumraksha used his arrows to make the army of monkeys flee once again.

11: तं राक्षसमहामात्रमापतन्तं सपत्नजित्

तरसा प्रतिजग्राह हनूमान्पवनात्मजः

12: तयोर्युद्धमभूद्घोरं हरिराक्षसवीरयोः

जिगीषतोर्युधान्योन्यमिन्द्रप्रह्लादयोरिव

13: गदाभिः परिघैश्चैव राक्षसो जघ्निवान्कपिम्

कपिश्च जघ्निवान्नाक्षः सस्कन्धविटपैर्द्रुमैः

14: ततस्तमतिकायेन साश्वं सरथसारथिम्

धूम्राक्षमवधीद्वीमान्हनूमान्मारुतात्मजः

11: taṃ rākṣasamahāmātramāpatantaṃ sapatnajit
tarasā pratijagrāha hanūmānpavanātmajaḥ

12: tayoryuddhamabhūdghoraṃ harirākṣasavīrayoḥ
jigīṣatoryudhānyonyamindraprahlādayoriva

13: gadābhiḥ parighaiścaiva rākṣaso jaghnivāṅkapim
kapiśca jaghnivāṅrakṣaḥ saskandhaviṭapairdrumaiḥ

14: tatastamatikāyena sāsvaṃ sarathasārathim
dhūmrākṣamavadhīddhīmānhanūmānmārutātmajaḥ

Verse no. 11: But Hanuman, the son of the wind-god who was always victorious over his enemies, swiftly grasped that mighty demon named Dhumraksha.

Verse no. 12: A terrifying duel raged between the monkey (Hanuman) and the brave demon warrior (Dhumraksha) as they tried their best to kill each other. It was a duel that reminded one of that which was fought between Indra and Prahalad¹.

[Note—¹Prahalad was the son of a demon named Hiranyakashipu. Once, a great war broke out between the gods and the demons. The gods were led by Indra, while the demons, also known as asuras, were led by Prahalad. In this battle which was fought with bravery on both the sides, as both the chief adversaries, Indra and Prahalad, were equal in strength and valour, Prahalad initially won. But when Prahalad, who was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, realised that Vishnu, who was himself a senior god, was on the side of the gods, Prahalad withdrew, paving the way for Indra's token victory. But as it is obvious in this brief story, the battle, in practical terms, was nothing but a draw between two great warriors of equal strength and power. Neither could claim absolute victory.

This example of two warriors of equal strength and valour fighting each other, and using the instance of Prahalad and Indra for it, has also been cited in canto 273, verse no. 18 of this narration.]

Verse no. 13: The demon (Dhumraksha) struck the monkey (Hanuman) with clubs and maces. The monkey retaliated by striking the demon commander with trees, complete with trunks and branches.

Verse no. 14: Then the powerful, strong and intelligent Hanuman, the son of the wind-god, who had assumed a colossal form in the battle-field, finally killed Dhumraksha along with his horses, chariot and charioteer.

15: ततस्तं निहतं दृष्ट्वा धूमाक्षं राक्षसोत्तमम्

हरयो जातविस्मभा जघ्नुरभ्येत्य सैनिकान्

16: ते वध्यमाना बलिभिर्हरिभिर्जितकाशिभिः

राक्षसा भग्नसंकल्पा लङ्कामभ्यपतन्भयात्

17: तेऽभिपत्य पुरं भग्ना हतशेषा निशाचराः
सर्वं राज्ञे यथावृत्तं रावणाय न्यवेदयन्

15: tatastaṃ nihataṃ dr̥ṣṭvā dhūmrākṣaṃ rākṣasottamam
harayo jātavisrambhā jaghnurabhyetya sainikān

16: te vadhyamānā balibhirharibhirjitakāśibhiḥ
rākṣasā bhagnasamkalpā laṅkāmahyapatānbhayāt

17: te'bhipatya puram bhagnā hataśeṣā niśācarāḥ
sarvaṃ rāḷṇe yathāvṛttaṃ rāvaṇāya nyavedayan

Verse no. 15: On seeing the great demon commander Dhumraksha killed in battle, reassurance returned to the monkeys, and they attacked the enemy soldiers with renewed vigour and punch, killing countless numbers of demon warriors.

Verse no. 16: Thus slaughtered by the powerful and victorious monkeys, the demon warriors, of what remnants of them were left on the battle-field, lost their courage and the resolve to fight, resulting in all of them fleeing towards Lanka in fear. {We must remember that the city of Lanka was located inside the wall of the fort, and it was separated from the battle-field by this wall.}

Verse no. 17: The shattered remnants of the stalkers of the night (i.e. the demons; 'niśācarāḥ') retreated hastily and returned to the city. On returning, they told their king Ravana everything that had transpired.

18: श्रुत्वा तु रावणस्तेभ्यः प्रहस्तं निहतं युधि
धूमाक्षं च महेष्वासं ससैन्यं वानरर्षभैः
19: सुदीर्घमिव निःश्वस्य समुत्पत्य वरासनात्
उवाच कुम्भकर्णस्य कर्मकालोऽयमागतः
20: इत्येवमुक्त्वा विविधैर्वादित्रैः सुमहास्वनैः
शयानमतिनिद्रालुं कुम्भकर्णमबोधयत्

18: śrutvā tu rāvaṇastebhyaḥ prahastaṃ nihataṃ yudhi
dhūmrākṣaṃ ca maheṣvāsaṃ sasainyaṃ vānararṣabhaiḥ

19: sudīrghamiva niḥśvasya samutpatya varāsanāt
uvāca kumbhakarṇasya karmakālo'yamāgataḥ

20: ityevamuktvā vividhairvāditraiḥ sumahāsvanaiḥ
śayānamatinidrālum kumbhakarṇamabodhayat

{The following verses reflect Ravana's desperation and his reliance on his powerful brother Kumbhakarna to turn the tide of battle against Lord Ram.}

Verse no. 18: When Ravana heard that Prahasta and the mighty archer Dhumraksha, together with their soldiers, had been killed in battle by the bulls among monkeys,

Verse no. 19: He sighed remorsefully and arose from his magnificent throne. He said, "The time has come for Kumbhakarna to act."

Verse no. 20: Saying this, he used many musical instruments, loud in their sounds, to awaken Kumbhakarna from his deep and prolonged sleep.

[Note--Kumbhakarna was Ravana's brother. Since he was of a huge size and had a voracious appetite, the creator Brahma thought that if this demon ate everyday, then there would nothing be left for other living to survive on. So, he corrupted Kumbhakarna's mind, making the latter ask for a boon that he would enable him to sleep for six months at a stretch and wake up only for one day after this period, and then again go to sleep for the next six months. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.

When the necessity arose to wake up Kumbhakarna from his deep slumber, loud noise from many kinds of drums and other musical instruments, as well as other means such as poking him with spears, and tickling his nose and ears were surely also employed. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 62; and (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 50. In both these versions of the Ramayana it is only said that 'great effort was made to awaken Kumbhakarna, but exactly how he was woken up has not been mentioned. So we learn in our present version of the story of the Ramayana that loud noise was employed to wake Kumbhakarna up.]

- 21: प्रबोध्य महता चैनं यत्नेनागतसाध्वसः
 स्वस्थमासीनमव्यग्रं विनिद्रं राक्षसाधिपः
 ततोऽब्रवीदशग्रीवः कुम्भकर्णं महाबलम्
 22: धन्योऽसि यस्य ते निद्रा कुम्भकर्णयमीदृशी
 य इमं दारुणं कालं न जानीषे महाभयम्
 23: एष तीर्त्वार्षवं रामः सेतुना हरिभिः सह
 अवमन्येह नः सर्वान्करोति कदनं महत्
 24: मया ह्यपहृता भार्या सीता नामास्य जानकी
 तां मोक्षयिषुरायातो बद्ध्वा सेतुं महार्णवे
 25: तेन चैव प्रहस्तादिर्महान्नः स्वजनो हतः
 तस्य नान्यो निहन्तास्ति त्वदृते शत्रुर्कशन
 26: स दंशितोऽभिनिर्याय त्वमद्य बलिनां वर
 रामादीन्समरे सर्वाञ्जहि शत्रून्रिंदम
 27: दूषणावरजौ चैव वज्रवेगप्रमाथिनौ
 तौ त्वां बलेन महता सहितावनुयास्यतः

21: prabodhya mahatā cainaṃ yatnenāgatasādhvasaḥ
svasthamāsīnamavyagraṃ vinidraṃ rākṣasādhipaḥ
tato'bravīddaśagrīvaḥ kumbhakaraṇaṃ mahābalaṃ

22: dhanyo'si yasya te nidrā kumbhakaraṇeyamīdṛśī
ya imaṃ dāruṇaṃ kālaṃ na jāniṣe mahābhayaṃ

23: eṣa tīrtvārṇavaṃ rāmaḥ setunā haribhiḥ saha
avamanyeha naḥ sarvāṅkaroti kadanaṃ mahat

24: mayā hyapahr̥tā bhāryā sītā nāmāsyā jānakī
tāṃ mokṣayiṣurāyāto baddhvā setuṃ mahārṇave

25: tena caiva prahastādirmahānnaḥ svajano hataḥ
tasya nānyo nihantāsti tvadṛte śatrukarśana

26: sa daṃśito'bhiniṛyāya tvamadya balināṃ vara
rāmādīnsamare sarvāñjahi śatrūnariṃdama

27: dūṣaṇāvarajau caiva vajravegapramāthinau
tau tvāṃ balena mahatā sahitāvanuyāsyataḥ

Verse no. 21: The mighty Ravana awoke Kumbhakaran with a great deal of effort. When the latter woke up and was comfortably seated and fully awake, Dashagriva (meaning one with ten necks or ten heads—a reference to Ravana), the lord of the demons, spoke to him as follows:--

Verse no. 22: "Oh Kumbhakarna! You are fortunate that you can sleep peacefully in this way, oblivious of the terrible calamity we face, and the great fear and peril that it has caused to all of us in the demon race.

Verse no. 23: Ram, with his monkeys, has crossed the ocean over a bridge. Ignoring all of us, he is engaged in a great slaughter, causing havoc in our city.

Verse no. 24: I have abducted his wife, Sita (the daughter of Janak)¹. So to recover her, Ram had a bridge constructed over the vast ocean with the help of monkeys.

[Note--¹In his opening remarks to Kumbhakaran in verse no. 23, Ravana laid the entire blame for the tumult caused in Lanka on the shoulders of Lord Ram. This was done with the purpose of igniting Kumbhakaran's anger straight away. Of course he soon divulged the reason for Lord Ram invading Lanka by telling his brother that he had abducted the Lord's wife Sita. But that was nothing unusual because Kumbhakaran knew the habit of his elder brother--that he was accustomed to kidnapping women-folk of others. In any case, credit must be given to Ravana for at least telling the truth. What was more important for Kumbhakaran at this point of time was the challenge that the demons faced from an invader who had wrecked havoc on Lanka and killed a large number of demon warriors, something never heard of or even imaginable ever since the demon kingdom was established.]

Verse no. 25: He has killed Prahasta and many of our relatives. Oh destroyer of enemies (śatrukarśana)! No one other than you is capable of tackling this invader and killing him.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-12 that precede Doha no. 62.]

Verse no. 26: Oh Kumbhakaran! You are the strongest, the bravest and the most powerful one amongst all who call themselves strong, powerful and brave. Now is the time for you to display your valour and abilities to save the honour of the demon race. So therefore, march to the battle-field. Oh vanquisher of enemies (śatrūnarīḍama)! Go and kill Ram and all the others in battle.

Verse no. 27: Accompanied by a large army, Dushana's two younger brothers, Vajravega and Pramathi, will follow you to the battle-field to assist you."

28: इत्युक्त्वा राक्षसपतिः कुम्भकर्ण तरस्विनम्
संदिदेशेतिकर्तव्ये वज्रवेगप्रमाथिनौ

29: तथेत्युक्त्वा तु तौ वीरौ रावणं दूषणानुजौ
कुम्भकर्णं पुरस्कृत्य तूर्णं निर्ययतुः पुरात्

28: ityuktvā rākṣasapatiḥ kumbhakarṇaṁ tarasvinam
saṁdideśetikartavye vajravegapramāthinau

29: tathetyuktvā tu tau vīrau rāvaṇaṁ dūṣaṇānujau
kumbhakarṇaṁ puraskṛtya tūrṇaṁ nirayatuḥ purāt

Verse no. 28: Having thus spoken to the mighty Kumbhakarna, the lord of the demons (Ravana) gave necessary instructions to Vajravega and Pramathi about what they should do, telling them about their duties and ordering them to prepare for battle.

Verse no. 29: Those two brave ones, Dushana's younger brothers, agreed to Ravana's instructions. With Kumbhakarna at the forefront, they marched out from the city (to face Lord Ram's army in the battle-field)."

Thus ends Canto 270.

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Canto 271:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततो विनिर्याय पुरात्कुम्भकर्णः सहानुगः

अपश्यत्कपिसैन्यं तज्जितकाश्यग्रतः स्थितम्

2: तमभ्येत्याशु हरयः परिवार्य समन्ततः
 अभ्यघ्नंश्च महाकायैर्बहुभिर्जगतीरुहैः
 करजैरतुदंश्चान्ये विहाय भयमुत्तमम्
 3: बहुधा युध्यमानास्ते युद्धमार्गैः प्लवंगमाः
 नानाप्रहरणैर्भीमं राक्षसेन्द्रमताडयन्

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca
 1: tato viniryāya purātkumbhakarnaḥ sahānugaḥ
 apaśyatkapisainyaṁ tajjitakāśyagrataḥ sthitam

2: tamabhyetyāśu harayaḥ parivārya samantataḥ
 abhyaghnaṁśca mahākāyairbahubhirjagatīruhaiḥ
 karajairatudamścānye vihāya bhayamuttamam

3: bahudhā yudhyamānāste yuddhamārgaiḥ plavaṅgamāḥ
 nānāpraharaṇairbhīmaṁ rākṣasendramatāḍayan

{This canto first describes the terrible battle that raged between Kumbhakarna, the younger brother of Ravana, and Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram, who was assisted by the Sugriv, the king of the monkeys. After Kumbhakarna was slayed by Laxman, the former's demon allies named Vajravega and Pramathi took charge of the battle-field and fought valiantly, but were soon slayed too.

In Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, however, it was Lord Ram who fought directly with Kumbhakarna unlike the narrative here which says that it was Laxman who fought the demon. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64--to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "When Kumbhakarna marched out from the city with his followers, he saw stationed before him the army of monkeys that was flush with victory.

Verse no. 2: The monkeys came up close to Kumbhakarna and surrounded him from all sides. They struck him with many gigantic trees. Discarding all fear, others lunged at him, biting and tearing at him with their nails and teeth.

Verse no. 3: Many monkeys, engaged in the fierce battle, used different means of fighting and different weapons to attack the terrible Kumbhakarna who was akin to Indra (the powerful king of gods) in the demon race.

4: स ताड्यमानः प्रहसन्भक्षयामास वानरान्
 पनसं च गवाक्षं च वज्रबाहुं च वानरम्
 5: तद्दृष्ट्वा व्यथनं कर्म कुम्भकर्णस्य रक्षसः
 उदक्रोशन्परित्रस्तास्तारप्रभृतयस्तदा

6: तं तारमुच्चैः क्रोशन्तमन्यांश्च हरियूथपान्
अभिदुद्राव सुग्रीवः कुम्भकर्णमपेतभीः

4: sa tāḍyamānaḥ prahasambhakṣayāmāsa vānarān
panasaṃ ca gavākṣaṃ ca vajrabāhuṃ ca vānaram

5: taddr̥ṣṭvā vyathanam karma kumbhakarṇasya rakṣasaḥ
udakrośanparitrastāstāraprabhṛtayastadā

6: taṃ tāramuccaiḥ krośantamanyāṃśca hariyūthapān
abhidudrāva sugrīvaḥ kumbhakarṇamapetabhīḥ

Verse no. 4: Thus struck, Kumbhakarna laughed derisively, and began devouring the monkeys, the chief ones amongst them being Panasa, Gavaksha and Vajrabahu.

Verse no. 5: On witnessing the harrowing deed of the demon Kumbhakarna, Taar and the other monkeys were extremely frightened, and they let out a loud cry of lamentation.

Verse no. 6: Hearing Taar's cries and those of other chiefs among the monkeys, Sugriva fearlessly rushed at Kumbhakarna.

7: ततोऽभिपत्य वेगेन कुम्भकर्णं महामनाः
शालेन जघ्निवान्मूर्ध्नि बलेन कपिकुञ्जरः
8: स महात्मा महावेगः कुम्भकर्णस्य मूर्ध्नि
बिभेद शालं सुग्रीवो न चैवाव्यथयत्कपिः
9: ततो विनद्य प्रहसञ्शालस्पर्शविबोधितः
दोर्भ्यामादाय सुग्रीवं कुम्भकर्णोऽहरद्बलात्

7: tato'bhipatya vegena kumbhakarṇam mahāmanāḥ
śālena jaghnivānmūrdhni balena kapikuñjaraḥ

8: sa mahātmā mahāvegaḥ kumbhakarṇasya mūrdhani
bibheda śālam sugrīvo na caivāvyathayatkapīḥ

9: tato vinadya prahasañśālasparśavibodhitāḥ
dorbyāmādāya sugrīvaṃ kumbhakarṇo'haradbalaṭ

Verse no. 7: Sugriv, who was like an elephant amongst the monkeys, swiftly arrived before Kumbhakarna, and powerfully struck the latter on the head with a huge shala tree.

Verse no. 8: Though Sugriv, who had a noble soul ('mahātmā'), struck Kumbhakarna on the head with great force, using all his might, the shala tree hurled by him broke

into two pieces without causing any harm to Kumbhakarna (as if a dry stalk of weed would itself break into pieces if it is struck against a rock) who stood unfazed in the wake of the assault.

Verse no. 9: It was as if he was suddenly awakened at the touch of the shala tree. Kumbhakarna laughed with contempt and roared derisively. He swiftly seized Sugriva in a firm grip, with great force (in an attempt to squeeze him to death or by dashing him violently to the ground).

10: ह्रियमाणं तु सुग्रीवं कुम्भकर्णेन रक्षसा
अवेक्ष्याभ्यद्रवद्वीरः सौमित्रिर्मित्रनन्दनः
11: सोऽभिपत्य महावेगं रुक्मपुङ्खं महाशरम्
प्राहिणोत्कुम्भकर्णाय लक्ष्मणः परवीरहा
12: स तस्य देहावरणं भित्त्वा देहं च सायकः
जगाम दारयन्भूमिं रुधिरेण समुक्षितः

10: hriyamāṇaṃ tu sugrīvaṃ kumbhakarṇena rakṣasā
avekṣyābhyadravadvīraḥ saumitrirmitranandanaḥ

11: so'bhipatya mahāvegāṃ rukmapuṅkhaṃ mahāśaram
prāhiṇotkumbhakarṇāya lakṣmaṇaḥ paravīrahā

12: sa tasya dehāvaraṇaṃ bhittvā dehaṃ ca sāyakaḥ
jagāma dārayanbhūmiṃ rudhireṇa samukṣitaḥ

Verse no. 10: On seeing Sugriva grasped by the demon Kumbhakarna who was preparing to either squeeze him to death or dash him on the ground with a mighty force, the brave Soumitri (Laxman), the delight of his friends, rushed forward to intervene.

Verse no. 11: Laxman, the destroyer of enemy warriors, hastily took one of his powerful arrows that had a golden tip, and shot it at Kumbhakarna with the speed of lightening.

Verse no. 12: That fierce arrow pierced through the demon warrior's body armour and entered his body, only to emerge from his body, with blood dripping all over it, and entered the earth by penetrating its surface¹. {This powerful arrow penetrated Kumbhakarna's armour and body, then emerged on the other side and hit the ground with such force that it entered the earth by digging into its surface.}

[Note--¹There is another way of interpreting this verse. It could mean that when the arrow hit Kumbhakarna with great force, it pierced through his body armour and entered his body. It then emerged on the other side drenched with blood. Meanwhile, with blood flowing from his wound, Kumbhakarna swooned and fell down on the ground with a mighty thud that caused the ground to cave in at that spot, and the arrow was buried in it under the weight of the demon's body.]

13: तथा स भिन्नहृदयः समुत्सृज्य कपीश्वरम्
 कुम्भकर्णो महेष्वासः प्रगृहीतशिलायुधः
 अभिद्रुद्राव सौमित्रिमुद्यम्य महतीं शिलाम्
 14: तस्याभिद्रवतस्तूर्ण क्षुराभ्यामुच्छ्रितौ करौ
 चिच्छेद निशिताग्राभ्यां स बभूव चतुर्भुजः
 15: तानप्यस्य भुजान्सर्वान्प्रगृहीतशिलायुधान्
 क्षुरैश्चिच्छेद लघ्वस्त्रं सौमित्रिः प्रतिदर्शयन्

13: tathā sa bhinnahrdayaḥ samutsrjya kapīśvaram
 kumbhakarṇo maheṣvāsaḥ pragṛhītaśilāyudhaḥ
 abhidudrāva saumitrimudyamya mahatīm śilām

14: tasyābhidravatastūrṇaṃ kṣurābhyāmucchritau karau
 ciccheda niśitāgrābhyāṃ sa babhūva caturbhujāḥ

15: tānapyasya bhujānsarvānpragṛhītaśilāyudhān
 kṣuraiściccheda laghvastraṃ saumitriḥ pratidarśayan

Verse no. 13: With his heart shattered, the great archer Kumbhakarna released Sugriv, the lord of the monkeys. He then grasped a huge rock to use it as a weapon, aimed it at Laxman, and dashed towards the latter (with the aim of hurling it violently at his opponent from close quarters).

Verse no. 14: While he was thus advancing with raised hands holding rocks and other weapons with which to attack Laxman, the latter swiftly sliced off two of Kumbhakarna's arms. Thus, the demon had only four arms left on his body (babhūva caturbhujāḥ).

[Note--This verse shows that Kumbhakarna had many arms--at least six. Two were sliced off by Laxman, and four remained on Kumbhakarna's body. The fact that the demon had many arms is also reiterated in verse no.16 herein below which states that the demon had a colossus body with many arms and legs.]

Verse no. 15: Laxman thus sliced off all those arms of Kumbhakarna which held rocks and other kinds of weapons, with arrows that were like sharp razors, thereby exhibiting his mastery in archery and the skill to use his arrows with precision.

16: स बभूवातिकायश्च बहुपादशिरोभुजः
 तं ब्रह्मास्त्रेण सौमित्रिर्ददाहाद्रिचयोपमम्
 17: स पपात महावीर्यो दिव्यास्त्राभिहतो रणे
 महाशनिविनिर्दग्धः पादपोऽङ्कुरवानिव

18: तं दृष्ट्वा वृत्रसंकाशं कुम्भकर्णं तरस्विनम्
गतासुं पतितं भूमौ राक्षसाः प्राद्रवन्भयात्

16: sa babhūvātikāyaśca bahupādaśirobhujah
taṁ brahmāstreṇa saumitirīdadāhādrīcayopamam

17: sa papāta mahāvīryo divyāstrābhihato raṇe
mahāśanivīnīrdagdhah pādapo'ṅkuravāniva

18: taṁ dṛṣṭvā vṛtrasaṁkāśaṁ kumbhakarnaṁ tarasvinam
gatāsuṁ patitaṁ bhūmau rākṣasāḥ prādravanbhayāt

Verse no. 16: The body of Kumbhakarna, who was furious by now, assumed a gigantic size, with many legs, heads and arms; he looked like a huge craggy mountain with protruding rocks and boulders from its sides. Laxman then used a fiery weapon known as 'brahmastra' to burn down Kumbhakarna's massive form. {This weapon was like an arrow tipped with some inflammable munition that ignited as soon as it hit its target.}

Verse no. 17: Struck by that powerful weapon, the immensely valorous Kumbhakarna fell down in battle much like a tree that has been burnt and uprooted by a stroke of lightning.

Verse no. 18: When the demon army saw Kumbhakarna fall down on the ground and crumble like a burnt tree that has been reduced to ashes, they were so terrified that all the demon soldiers fled from the site out of fear for their own lives.

19: तथा तान्द्रवतो योधान्दृष्ट्वा तौ दूषणानुजौ
अवस्थाप्याथ सौमित्रिं संक्रुद्धावभ्यधावताम्
20: तावाद्रवन्तौ संक्रुद्धौ वज्रवेगप्रमाथिनौ
प्रतिजग्राह सौमित्रिर्विन्द्योभौ पतत्रिभिः

19: tathā tāndravato yodhāndṛṣṭvā tau dūṣaṇānujau
avasthāpyātha saumitriṁ saṁkruddhāvabhyadhāvatām

20: tāvādravantau saṁkruddhau vajravegapramāthinau
pratijagrāha saumitirvinadyobhau patatribhiḥ

Verse no. 19: On seeing the demon warriors run away in fright, Dushana's younger brothers (Vajravega and Pramathi) restrained them and furiously attacked Laxman.

Verse no. 20: On seeing Vajravega and Pramathi, the two powerful demon commanders, wrathfully advancing towards him, Laxman retaliated by attacking them with a volley of feathered shafts (arrows).

21: ततः सुतुमुलं युद्धमभवल्लोमहर्षणम्
 दूषणानुजयोः पार्थ लक्ष्मणस्य च धीमतः
 22: महता शरवर्षेण राक्षसौ सोऽभ्यवर्षत
 तौ चापि वीरौ संक्रुद्धावुभौ तौ समवर्षताम्
 23: मुहूर्तमेवमभवद्वज्रवेगप्रमाथिनोः
 सौमित्रेश्च महाबाहोः संप्रहारः सुदारुणः

21: tataḥ sutumulaṁ yuddhamabhavallomaharṣaṇam
 dūṣaṇānujayoḥ pārtha lakṣmaṇasya ca dhīmataḥ

22: mahatā śaravarṣeṇa rākṣasau so'bhyavarṣata
 tau cāpi vīrau saṁkruddhāvubhau tau samavarṣatām

23: muhūrtamevamabhavadvajravegapramāthinoḥ
 saumitreśca mahābāhoḥ saṁprahāraḥ sudāruṇaḥ

Verse no. 21: {Sage Markandeya continued—} ‘Oh Partha (i.e. Yudhisthira)! A terrible battle then raged between Dushana's younger brothers (Vajravega and Pramathi) and Laxman who was intelligent and well-versed in warfare. This duel was so furious that it raised the hairs on the bodies of all those who watched it (i.e. both the demons as well as the monkeys and bears).

Verse no. 22: Laxman shot so many arrows so swiftly that they covered the two demon commanders from all sides like a huge shroud being thrown over them. Meanwhile, not to be let down, those two demon warriors retaliated in the same measure by showering arrows on Laxman. He enveloped the rakshasas with a large shower of arrows. Those two brave ones also angrily rained down on him. {For sometime, the battle-field was filled with an intense storm of arrows raining down on all sides as Laxman and the two demon warriors fought each other with devastating force.}

Verse no. 23: That extremely terrible battle between Vajravega and Pramathi on the one side, and the mighty Laxman on the other side, lasted, however, only for a short while.

24: अथाद्रिशृङ्गमादाय हनूमान्मारुतात्मजः
 अभिद्रुत्याददे प्राणान्वज्रवेगस्य रक्षसः
 25: नीलश्च महता ग्राव्णा दूषणावरजं हरिः
 प्रमाथिनमभिद्रुत्य प्रममाथ महाबलः

24: athādrīśṛṅgamādāya hanūmānmārutātmajaḥ
 abhidruṭyādade prāṇānvajravegasya rakṣasaḥ

25: nīlaśca mahatā grāvṇā dūṣaṇāvarajaṃ hariḥ
pramāthinamabhidrutya pramamātha mahābalaḥ

Verse no. 24: Then Hanuman, the son of the wind-god, grasped the peak of a mountain and attacked Vajravega, striking the latter like a thunderbolt, thereby taking away his life.

Verse no. 25: Similarly, the immensely strong monkey, Neela, rushed at Dushana's younger brother Pramathi, and crushed him with a large rock.

26: ततः प्रावर्तत पुनः संग्रामः कटुकोदयः

रामरावणसैन्यानामन्योन्यमभिधावताम्

27: शतशो नैरृतान्वन्या जघ्नुर्वन्यांश्च नैरृताः

नैरृतास्तत्र वध्यन्ते प्रायशो न तु वानराः

26: tataḥ prāvartata punaḥ saṃgrāmaḥ kaṭukodayaḥ
rāmarāvaṇasainyānāmanyonyamabhidhāvatām

27: śataśo nairṛtānvanyā jaghnurvanyāṃśca nairṛtāḥ
nairṛtāstatra vadyante prāyaśo na tu vānarāḥ

Verse no. 26: There was again a terrible battle between the forces of Lord Ram and those of Ravana, as they attacked each other with ferocity. {There was a flare-up as the two warring sides charged at each other, attacking their opponents furiously.}

Verse no. 27: The forest-dwelling monkeys killed the demons by the hundreds, and the demons retaliated by killing the monkeys, but in the no-holds-barred hand-to-hand combat that ensued, the number of demons killed was far more than that of the monkeys."

Thus ends Canto 271.

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Canto 272:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततः श्रुत्वा हतं संख्ये कुम्भकर्णं सहानुगम्

प्रहस्तं च महेष्वासं धूमाक्षं चातितेजसम्

2: पुत्रमिन्द्रजितं शूरं रावणः प्रत्यभाषत

जहि रामममित्रघ्न सुग्रीवं च सलक्ष्मणम्

3: त्वया हि मम सत्पुत्र यशो दीप्तमुपार्जितम्

जित्वा वज्रधरं संख्ये सहस्राक्षं शचीपतिम्

4: अन्तर्हितः प्रकाशो वा दिव्यैर्दत्तवरैः शरैः
जहि शत्रूनमित्रघ्न मम शस्त्रभृतां वर

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tataḥ śrutvā hataṃ saṃkhye kumbhakarnaṃ sahānugam
prahastaṃ ca maheṣvāsaṃ dhūmrākṣaṃ cātitejasam

2: putramindrajitaṃ śūraṃ rāvaṇaḥ pratyabhāṣata
jahi rāmamamitraghna sugrīvaṃ ca salakṣmaṇam

3: tvayā hi mama satputra yaśo dīptamupārjitaṃ
jitvā vajradharaṃ saṃkhye sahasrākṣaṃ śacīpatim

4: antarhitaḥ prakāśo vā divyairdattavaraiḥ śaraiḥ
jahi śatrūnamitraghna mama śastrabhṛtāṃ vara

{After Kumbhakarna was killed, Ravana approached his son Indrajit, so called because he had once vanquished Indra, the king of gods, during a battle. His other name was Meghanad, as he used to roar resoundingly like a thunder that is often heard rumbling through the body of dark rain-clouds during a violent storm. Ravana instigated Indrajit to join the war and avenge the death of his uncle Kumbhakarna and other great demons such as Khar. Indrajit reassured his father Ravana not to worry at all as he was capable and determined to set all things straight and take proper revenge.

Hence, the next phase of the war between Ravana and Lord Ram was fought between Indrajit on one side, and Lord Ram, Laxman and Angad on the other side. This battle was fought in two phases. The present canto no. 272 describes the first phase during which Indrajit, who was an expert in the use of Maya (i.e. deception and black magic tricks) to cheat, mislead and get the better of his opponent by employing tricks and unconventional methods during a combat, put his skills to good use, and left Lord Ram and Laxman dazed by his maverick ways. By the end of this canto, both the brothers fell unconscious on the ground when Indrajit seemed to have the upper hand and gained command of the battle-field. This first phase is also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 72--Doha no. 74.

In the next canto no. 273 that follows herein after, the second phase of this battle will be described wherein we shall read that, by-and-by, Indrajit was finally killed in a combat with Laxman.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "On hearing that Kumbhakarna, along with his followers, the great archer Prahasta and the immensely energetic Dhumraksha, had been killed in battle, Ravana was heartbroken.

Verse no. 2: Seeing a grave situation staring in his face, he urgently went to speak to his son, the brave Indrajit. Ravana said to him: "Oh my valiant son who is a vanquisher of enemies, one who has defeated even the mighty Indra (the king of gods) (putramindrajitaṃ śūraṃ)! Its time for you to rise up and display your skills by killing Ram, Sugriv and Laxman.

Verse no. 3: Oh my good son (mama satputra)! You have earned a great honour for me by vanquishing in battle Shachi's consort Indra (jītvā--śacīpatim), the thousand-eyed one (saṁkhye sahasrākṣaṁ)¹ and the wielder of the vajra (vajradharaṁ).

Verse no. 4: Oh slayer of foes and vanquisher of enemies (śatrūnamitraghna)! Oh the one who is regarded as being supreme amongst those who wield weapons (śastrabhṛtāṁ vara)! Remain invisible or visible--that is your choice (antarhitāḥ prakāśo vā), but use the divine weapons, such as the arrows, obtained by you as boons to get rid of my enemies (divyairdattavaraiḥ śaraiḥ jahi śatrūnamitraghna mama). By achieving success in it, it is sure that your glory will shine all over, and for all times to come.

[Note--¹Why did Indra have a 'thousand eyes'? The story goes as follows:

Indra is called by the name 'Sahastraaksha', which literally means to have thousand eyes. He is called so because his whole body is covered by thousands of holes resembling the marks left on one's body after chicken-pox or some serious skin disease. He had got them as a result of a curse by sage Gautam to punish him for being sexually pervert as he had the vile temerity of having attempted sex with the sage's loyal wife in his absence by employing deceit. The lecherous Indra had assumed the physical body of the sage to satisfy his lust, but was caught by the sage. So the sage cursed him to have a thousand holes in his body. These 'holes' represented the female vagina, and the curse was in the form of sarcastic curse on Indra so that now onwards he would be able to see a woman's sexual organs spread all over his own body with thousands of eyes instead of only two to satisfy his lust and perversions. It was also intended to tell the world in a symbolic manner about the punishment that one gets by being excessively lustful in the sense that one instance of lecherousness would create thousands of horrible spots that would taint a man's character and personality forever, no matter how socially established or well-placed he may be. After all, Indra was a king of Gods, and one can imagine his discomfiture that he would have to remain with a pot-holed and scarred body for the rest of his life.

Ahilya was however liberated from her curse by Lord Ram when he touched her stone-like form by his feet while going to Janakpur with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow-breaking ceremony of Sita that would lead to the Lord getting married to her. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 and Chand line nos. 116 that precede Doha no. 211.]

5: रामलक्ष्मणसुग्रीवाः शरस्पर्शं न तेऽनघ

समर्थाः प्रतिसंसोढुं कुतस्तदनुयायिनः

6: अकृता या प्रहस्तेन कुम्भकर्णेन चानघ

खरस्यापचितिः संख्ये तां गच्छस्व महाभुज

7: त्वमद्य निशितैर्बाणैर्हत्वा शत्रून्सैनिकान्

प्रतिनन्दय मां पुत्र पुरा बद्ध्वेव वासवम्

5: rāmalakṣmaṇasugrīvāḥ śarasparśaṁ na te'nagha
samarthāḥ pratisaṁsodhum kutastadanuyāyinaḥ

6: akṛtā yā prahastena kumbhakarṇena cānagha
kharasyāpacitiḥ saṁkhye tām gacchasva mahābhujā

7: tvamadya niśitairbāṇairhatvā śatrūnsasainikān
pratinandaya mām putra purā baddhveva vāsavam

Verse no. 5: Oh my son who has an unblemished reputation (for bravery, valour and courage) (te'nagha)! What to speak of the others, even Ram, Laxman and Sugriva, who are reputed to be very strong, brave and invincible, are simply incapable of withstanding the touch of your arrows. {To wit, your arrows carry so much punch and power that when they hit someone, then no matter how powerful or strong the target may be, that person has no chance whatever to stand against them. So therefore, Ram, Laxman and Sugriv, no matter how strong and powerful they might be, are no match against you; they have no chance of escaping death when your arrows slam into them. So go ahead and teach our enemies a lesson of their lives.}

Verse no. 6: Oh the one with an unblemished reputation (cānagha)! Oh mighty-armed one (mahābhujā)! Even Prahasta and Kumbhakarna could not complete the task of avenging the death of Khara¹. Go and accomplish that goal in battle.

[Note--¹The slaying of the demon Khar along with Dushan have been narrated in Canto 261, verse nos. 42-42 earlier.]

Verse no. 7: Using your sharp arrows, kill my enemies and their soldiers today. Oh son! Increase my delight, as you have done in the past by making Vasava (Indra) captive.²

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183.]

8: इत्युक्तः स तथेत्युक्त्वा रथमास्थाय दंशितः

प्रययाविन्द्रजिद्राजंस्तूर्णमायोधनं प्रति

9: तत्र विश्राव्य विस्पष्टं नाम राक्षसपुंगवः

आहवयामास समरे लक्ष्मणं शुभलक्षणम्

10: तं लक्ष्मणोऽप्यभ्यधावत्प्रगृह्य सशरं धनुः

त्रासयंस्तलघोषेण सिंहः क्षुद्रमृगं यथा

11: तयोः समभवद्युद्धं सुमहज्जयगृद्धिनोः

दिव्यास्त्रविदुषोस्तीव्रमन्योन्यस्पर्धिनोस्तदा

8: ityuktaḥ sa tathetyuktvā rathamāsthāya daṁśitaḥ
prayayāvindrajidrajaṁstūrṇamāyodhanam prati

9: tatra viśrāvya vispaṣṭam nāma rākṣasapuṅgavaḥ
āhvayāmāsa samare lakṣmaṇam śubhalakṣaṇam

10: taṃ lakṣmaṇo'pyabhyadhāvatpragr̥hya saśaraṃ dhanuḥ
trāsayaṃstalaghoṣeṇa siṃhaḥ kṣudramṛgaṃ yathā

11: tayoḥ samabhavadyuḍḍhaṃ sumahajjayagr̥ddhinoḥ
divyāstraviduṣostivramanyonyaspardhinostadā

Verse no. 8: Sage Markandeya said to Yudhisthira: "Oh king! Having heard these words, Indrajit agreed. He donned his armour, and mounting on his chariot he made his way towards the battlefield.

Verse no. 9: Indrajit, who was like an outstanding bull amongst the demons ('rākṣasapuṃgavaḥ'; i.e. was a very strong, powerful and courageous demon prince, and one amongst the best in the race), then announced his name and challenged Laxman, who had all the auspicious signs characteristic of a noble man and a great warrior (śubhalakṣaṇam), to a duel.

Verse no. 10: Laxman grasped his bow and arrows, and clapping with his hands to warn everyone that the duel is about to commence, rushed forward towards Indrajit, creating terror in the hearts of all those who were watching, like a lion does amongst small animals when it rushes forward towards its prey.

Verse no. 11: A terrible and fierce battle then started between those two brave warriors, both of whom desired victory, were skilled in use of divine weapons, and defied each other in prowess, skill and strategy. {This duel was like a competition between two expert warriors or gladiators challenging each other in a duel in an arena in ancient times, a bloody duel that culminated in the death of one of them.}

12: रावणिस्तु यदा नैनं विशेषयति सायकैः

ततो गुरुतरं यत्नमातिष्ठद्बलिनां वरः

13: तत एनं महावेगैर्दयामास तोमरैः

तानागतान्स चिच्छेद सौमित्रिर्निशितैः शरैः

ते निकृत्ताः शरैस्तीक्ष्णैर्न्यपतन्वसुधातले

12: rāvaṇistu yadā nainaṃ viśeṣayati sāyakaiḥ
tato gurutaraṃ yatnamātiṣṭhadbalināṃ varaḥ

13: tata enaṃ mahāvegairardayāmāsa tomaraiḥ
tānāgatānsa ciccheda saumitrirniśitaiḥ śaraiḥ
te nikṛttāḥ śaraistīkṣṇairnyapatanvasudhātale

Verse no. 12: When Ravana's son, supreme among strong ones, could not get the better of his adversary through arrows, he tried harder and employed other methods.

Verse no. 13: With great force, Indrajit hurled many javelins at Laxman, but the latter used his sharp arrows to cut them to pieces which fell down on the ground.

14: तमङ्गदो वालिसुतः श्रीमानुद्यम्य पादपम्
 अभिद्रुत्य महावेगस्ताडयामास मूर्धनि
 15: तस्येन्द्रजिदसंभ्रान्तः प्रासेनोरसि वीर्यवान्
 प्रहर्तुमैच्छत्तं चास्य प्रासं चिच्छेद लक्ष्मणः

14: tamaṅgado vālisutaḥ śrīmānudyamya pādapam
 abhidrutya mahāvegastāḍayāmāsa mūrdhani

15: tasyendrajidasambhrāntaḥ prāsenorasi vīryavān
 prahartumaicchattaṁ cāsyā prāsaṁ ciccheda lakṣmaṇaḥ

Verse no. 14: Then Vaali's illustrious son Angada uprooted a tree, and rushing at Indrajit with great force, he dashed the latter on the head with it.

Verse no. 15: However, the brave Indrajit was unperturbed. He grasped a lance and hurled it at Angad's chest, but Laxman cut it down immediately.

16: तमभ्याशगतं वीरमङ्गदं रावणात्मजः
 गदयाताडयत्सव्ये पार्श्वे वानरपुंगवम्
 17: तमचिन्त्य प्रहारं स बलवान्वालिनः सुतः
 ससर्जन्द्रजितः क्रोधाच्छालस्कन्धममित्रजित्

16: tamabhyāśagataṁ vīramaṅgadaṁ rāvaṇātmajaḥ
 gadayātāḍayatsavye pārsve vānarapuṅgavam

17: tamacintya prahāraṁ sa balavānvālinaḥ sutaḥ
 sasarjendrajitaḥ krodhācchālaskandhamamitrajit

Verse no. 16: Since the brave Angada (vīramaṅgadaṁ) who was like a bull amongst the monkeys (vānarapuṅgavam), was standing nearby, Indrajit, the son of Ravana (rāvaṇātmajaḥ), used this opportunity to strike Angad viciously on the side with a club (gadayātāḍayatsavye pārsve).

Verse no. 17: Vaali's brave son ignored the blow. The one who was victorious over his enemies (i.e. Angad) then retaliated wrathfully by hurling a huge trunk of a shala tree at Indrajit.

18: सोऽङ्गदेन रुषोत्सृष्टो वधायेन्द्रजितस्तरुः
 जघानेन्द्रजितः पार्थ रथं साश्वं ससारथिम्
 19: ततो हताश्वत्प्रस्कन्द्य रथात्स हतसारथिः
 तत्रैवान्तर्दधे राजन्मायया रावणात्मजः

18: so'ṅgadena ruṣotsrṣṭo vadhāyendrajitastaruḥ
jaghānendrajitaḥ pārtha rathaṁ sāsvaṁ sasārathim

19: tato hatāśvātpraskandya rathātsa hatasārathiḥ
tatraivāntardadhe rājanmāyayā rāvaṇātmajaḥ

Verse no. 18: Oh Partha (Yudhisthira)! That tree, angrily hurled by Angada for the purpose of killing Indrajit, destroyed his chariot along with its horses and the charioteer.

Verse no. 19: With the horses and the charioteer dead, Indrajit jumped down from the demolished chariot. Oh king! Ravana's son instantly disappeared through the use of maya¹.

[Note--¹The word 'Maya' means the use of deception, illusion and tricks to deceive and mislead others. Its an art form used during warfare. Even today, armies use camouflage and other means to conceal identities and maintain secrecy as used by spies, or employed during covert operation such as the use of radar-evading war planes, munitions, drones etc. This method was used extensively in earlier times also, albeit in a different form and mode in accordance with the prevalent age, weapons used, war techniques and strategies, and other ground realities of those times. One famous case that comes to mind is the one related to the story of the 'Trojan Horse'.

In the present case, Indrajit was one such skilled warrior who could employ all sorts of deception, creation of illusion and other kinds of magic tricks to mislead and cheat his adversary, and throw the latter in a tailspin of confusion and doubts so that he (Indrajit) can have an upper hand during a combat and win the duel.

One such trick he was skilled in was to become invisible; he appeared and disappeared at will before his challenger, making the latter utterly confused and disoriented. Indrajit would then attack on the sly, leaving his enemy unable to defend itself. Ram Charit Manas describes how Indrajit rushed to the sky in an invisible form, and from there he rained arrows and other weapons on the monkeys and bears who were confounded as they could not see him anywhere. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 72--to Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 73.}

He knew other tricks too: he would shoot arrows that transformed into snakes that would then coil around his enemies, virtually tying them in a firm grip. He had used this trick against Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 73.}

In verse nos. 20-26 that follow herein below, we shall read exactly this happening.]

20: अन्तर्हितं विदित्वा तं बहुमायं च राक्षसम्
रामस्तं देशमागम्य तत्सैन्यं पर्यरक्षत
21: स राममुद्दिश्य शरैस्ततो दत्तवरैस्तदा
विव्याध सर्वगात्रेषु लक्ष्मणं च महारथम्

22: तमदृश्यं शरैः शूरा माययान्तर्हितं तदा
योधयामासतुरुभौ रावणिं रामलक्ष्मणौ

20: antarhitam viditvā taṁ bahumāyaṁ ca rākṣasam
rāmastaṁ deśamāgamyā tatsainyaṁ paryarakṣata

21: sa rāmamuddiśya śaraistato dattavaraistadā
vivyādha sarvagātreṣu lakṣmaṇaṁ ca mahāratham

22: tamadrśyaṁ śaraiḥ śūrau māyayāntarhitam tadā
yodhayāmāsaturubhau rāvaṇiṁ rāmalakṣmaṇau

Verse no. 20: Knowing that the demon was skilled in many forms of maya and could become invisible, Lord Ram arrived at that spot to protect his army.

Verse no. 21: Indrajit then aimed his arrows, that were obtained by him through boons, at Lord Ram and pierced the immensely strong Laxman all over his body.

Verse no. 22: The brave brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, fought with Ravana's son Indrajit who remained invisible through the use of maya. Thus remaining out of sight, the demon fought them with his arrows. {Obviously, Indrajit employed this trick of remaining invisible while striking at Lord Ram and Laxman so that they would not be able to hit back simply because they wouldn't know where he was, and in which direction to shoot their arrows.}

23: स रुषा सर्वगात्रेषु तयोः पुरुषसिंहयोः
व्यसृजत्सायकान्भूयः शतशोऽथ सहस्रशः
24: तमदृश्यं विचिन्वन्तः सृजन्तमनिशं शरान्
हरयो विविशुर्व्योमं प्रगृह्य महतीः शिलाः

23: sa ruṣā sarvagātreṣu tayoh puruṣasiṁhayoh
vyasrjatsāyakānbhūyaḥ śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ

24: tamadrśyaṁ vicinventaḥ srjantamaniśaṁ śarān
harayo viviśurvyoma pragṛhya mahatīḥ śilāḥ

Verse no. 23: In great anger, Indrajit unleashed hundreds and thousands of arrows at Lord Ram and Laxman who were like lions amongst men (puruṣasiṁhayoh). These arrows covered the bodies of the two brave warriors from all the sides.

Verse no. 24: When the monkey warriors saw that Indrajit remained invisible while showering down arrows, they grasped large rocks and took to the sky from where these arrows were raining down. {Though Indrajit was not visible to them, the monkeys were quick to realise that it was certain that he was somewhere in the sky in direction from which the arrows were coming down. Hence, they made a dash for

Indrajit roughly in the direction from where the arrows were being shot on Lord Ram and Laxman. }¹

[Note--¹This particular event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas also, in its Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 73.]

25: तांश्च तौ चाप्यदृश्यः स शरैर्विव्याध राक्षसः

स भृशं ताडयन्वीरो रावणिर्माययावृतः

26: तौ शरैराचितौ वीरौ भ्रातरौ रामलक्ष्मणौ

पेततुर्गगनाद्भूमिं सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव

25: tāṁśca tau cāpyadrśyaḥ sa śarairvivyādha rākṣasaḥ
sa bhr̥ṣaṁ tāḍayanvīro rāvaṇirmāyayāvṛtaḥ

26: tau śarairācītau vīrau bhrātarau rāmalakṣmaṇau
petaturgaganādbhūmiṁ sūryācandramasāviva

Verse no. 25: Ravana's brave son Indrajitt used maya (the magical power to become invisible to one's opponent in the battle-field) and continued to severely oppress the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) with a hail of arrows.

Verse no. 26: Struck by the arrows, the two brave brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, fell down unconscious on the ground, as if the Sun and the Moon have respectively been dislodged from the sky and made to fall down on earth¹."

[Note--¹Here, Lord Ram is compared to the Sun, and Laxman to the Moon.]

Thus ends Canto 272.

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Canto 273:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: तावुभौ पतितौ दृष्ट्वा भ्रातरावमितौजसौ

बबन्ध रावणिर्भूयः शरैर्दत्तवरैस्तदा

2: तौ वीरौ शरजालेन बद्धाविन्द्रजिता रणे

रेजतुः पुरुषव्याघ्रौ शकुन्ताविव पञ्जरे

3: तौ दृष्ट्वा पतितौ भूमौ शतशः सायकैश्चितौ

सुग्रीवः कपिभिः सार्धं परिवार्य ततः स्थितः

4: सुषेणमैन्दद्विविदैः कुमुदेनाङ्गदेन च

हनूमन्नीलतारैश्च नलेन च कपीश्वरः

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tāvubhau patitau dr̥ṣṭvā bhrātarāvamitaujasau
babandha rāvaṇirbhūyaḥ śarairdattavaraistadā

2: tau vīrau śarajālena baddhāvindrajitā raṇe
rejatuh puruṣavyāghrau śakuntāviva pañjare

3: tau dr̥ṣṭvā patitau bhūmau śataśaḥ sāyakaīścitau
sugrīvaḥ kapibhiḥ sārddham parivārya tataḥ sthitaḥ

4: suṣeṇamaindadvividaiḥ kumudenāṅgadena ca
hanūmannīlatāraiśca nalena ca kapīśvaraḥ

{In this canto, the second phase of combat between Indrajit and Lord Ram's forces led by Laxman has been described, culminating in the death of Indrajit at the hands of Laxman. This second phase of duel between Indrajit and Laxman has also been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-16 that precede Doha no. 76.

When Ravana heard of the death of his valiant son Indrajit, who was renowned as being invincible and had even conquered Indra, the king of gods, he (Ravana) was very angry and frustrated. Having lost his temper, and the sense of propriety and wisdom, he dashed to the Ashoka garden with an intent to kill Sita to avenge the death of not only his valorous brother Kumbhakarna and his invincible son Indrajit but also many of his other trusted demon warriors, on whom he had relied all through his life, in combats with Lord Ram and his forces in the battle-field.

At this juncture, a wise demon named Avindhya intervened to calm Ravana down. He told the demon king that no great purpose would be served by killing a harmless and helpless woman, as this cowardly deed would put a scar on his reputation as being a mighty warrior. The world would say that Ravana could not stand against a powerful man, so he vented his frustration on a poor woman who was already on the verge of death due to fasting and austerities she was involved in. On the contrary, Ravana should kill her husband, the warrior Lord Ram, if he wishes to have credibility and preserve his reputation. Once Ram is dead, there is no doubt that Sita would be dead too. In this way, he would not only save his reputation but also kill two birds with a single act simultaneously--viz. defeat his enemy and send his forces fleeing from Lanka, and get rid of Sita. She would either die or surrender herself to him.

This argument seemed reasonable to Ravana who agreed. He then prepared for combat and marched to the battle-field along with his army in full force. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 78.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "When he saw that the infinitely energetic brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) had fallen down, Ravana's son (Indrajit) bound them down with arrows obtained through a boon.

Verse no. 2: Those brave ones, who were like tigers amongst men, were bound down by Indrajit's arrows in battle like birds trapped in a cage.

Verse nos. 3-4: On seeing them fallen down on the ground, covered in hundreds of arrows, Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, stood around them with all the other monkey commanders, such as Sushena, Mainda, Dvividā, Kumuda, Angada, Hanuman, Nila, Taar and Nala, in attendance.

5: ततस्तं देशमागम्य कृतकर्मा विभीषणः

बोधयामास तौ वीरौ प्रज्ञास्त्रेण प्रबोधितौ

6: विशल्यौ चापि सुग्रीवः क्षणेनोभौ चकार तौ

विशल्यया महौषध्या दिव्यमन्त्रप्रयुक्तया

5: tatastaṃ deśamāgamyā kṛtakarmā vibhīṣaṇaḥ
bodhayāmāsa tau vīrau prajñāstreṇa prabodhitau

6: viśalyau cāpi sugrīvaḥ kṣaṇenobhau cakāra tau
viśalyayā mahauṣadhyā divyamantraprayuktayā

Verse no. 5: Meanwhile, Vibhishan, accomplished and auspicious in his deeds, too arrived at the spot. He brought the brave ones (Lord Ram and Laxman) back to consciousness with a weapon known as 'prajna', a life-restoring weapon that had the ability to counter the negative effects of deadly weapons that were life threatening for a living being.

Verse no. 6: Sugriv also did his bid to revive Lord Ram and Laxman by using the great herb known as 'vishalya'. He invoked divine mantras to make this herb effective. By its application on the two brothers, Sugriva was able to remove the arrows that stuck on their bodies like thorns.

[Note--In this way, by the simultaneous use of both these tools, the weapon known as 'prajna' and the herb known as 'vishalya', Vibhishan and Sugriv managed to revive Lord Ram and Laxman back to life. Further, this herb also quickly healed their injured bodies. In the modern world's context, we can say that these two tools were antidotes to the dangerous and life threatening effects of the arrows shot by Indrajit at Lord Ram and Laxman. When administered to the two brothers, one as an injection and the other as an ointment, the revival and healing was quick.]

7: तौ लब्धसंज्ञौ नृवरौ विशल्यावुदतिष्ठताम्

गततन्द्रीकलमौ चास्तां क्षणेनोभौ महारथौ

8: ततो विभीषणः पार्थ राममिक्ष्वाकुनन्दनम्

उवाच विज्वरं दृष्ट्वा कृताञ्जलिरिदं वचः

7: tau labdhasaṃjñau nṛvarau viśalyāvudatiṣṭhatām
gatatandriklamau cāstāṃ kṣaṇenobhau mahārathau

8: tato vibhīṣaṇaḥ pārtha rāmamiḥṣvākunandanam
uvāca vijvaraṃ dr̥ṣṭvā kṛtāñjaliridaṃ vacaḥ

Verse no. 7: With the arrows removed from their bodies, those two mighty warriors (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) recovered their senses and stood up. Their vigour and stamina were restored to their original level, and all pain and fatigue had gone.

Verse no. 8: Oh Partha (Yudhisthira)! Seeing that Lord Ram was freed of the fever that had gripped him¹ when he was hit by Indrajit's poisonous arrows, Vibhishan joined his hands in salutation and told Lord Ram, who was a descendant of the Ikshvaku lineage, as follows:-

[Note--¹When the arrows struck the two brothers, they swooned and fell down, shivering just like one suffering from high fever. When someone is bitten by a poisonous snake, it is observed that the victim shakes and shivers before collapsing unconscious on the ground. The same reaction happens if a person steps on some razor-sharp wire that cuts vital nerves. It also happens in attacks of epilepsy where often rigidity of limbs, convulsions and clenching of fists are also noticed in addition to involuntary shaking and shivering. What is meant here in simple terms is that as soon as the antidotes were administered to Lord Ram and Laxman, their trembling of limbs and shaking of the body stopped immediately.]

9: अयमम्भो गृहीत्वा तु राजराजस्य शासनात्

गुह्यकोऽभ्यागतः श्वेतात्त्वत्सकाशमरिंदम

10: इदमम्भः कुबेरस्ते महाराजः प्रयच्छति

अन्तर्हितानां भूतानां दर्शनार्थं परंतप

11: अनेन स्पृष्टनयनो भूतान्यन्तर्हितान्युत

भवान्द्रक्ष्यति यस्मै च भवानेतत्प्रदास्यति

9: ayamambho gr̥hītvā tu rājarājasya śāsanāt
guhyako'bhyāgataḥ śvetāttvatsakāśamariṇḍama

10: idamambhaḥ kuberaste mahārājaḥ prayacchati
antarhitānāṃ bhūtānāṃ darśanārthaṃ paraṃtapa

11: anena spr̥ṣṭanayano bhūtānyantarhitānyuta
bhavāndrakṣyati yasmai ca bhavānetatpradāsyati

Verse no. 9: Vibhishan said to Lord Ram: "Oh destroyer of enemies! This guhyaka (a cave-dweller) has arrived here from Mount Shveta. He has brought this water on the instructions of the king of the yakshas, Kuber¹.

[Note--¹Yaksha: Refer to an elaborate note appended to verse no. 12 of canto 265 that describes who a 'Yaksha' is. Kuber, the treasurer of gods, is the lord of all the Yakshas. Incidentally, Kuber is also an elder brother of Ravana, and by extension of Vibhishan too. Ravana had been tormenting Kuber along with other gods; he had

snatched Kuber's airplane called Pushapak and brought it to Lanka for his personal use. Besides this, the creator Brahma had made Kuber the king of the golden city of Lanka from which he was thrown out by Ravana who grabbed the city and made it his capital. Hence, Kuber harboured a personal grudge against Ravana. So, when the war was being fought in Lanka, Kuber was seeking an opportunity to get rid of Ravana, and for this he deemed it necessary to help Lord Ram in any way he could. Therefore, when the Lord was wounded by Inrajit, Kuber decided to send one of his trusted assistants, the Yaksha mentioned here, with a pot containing a divine liquid, which was in practical terms a medicine made of a concoction of herbs in a liquid or paste form, which when applied on the eyes of a person enables the latter to see the reality behind a facade of delusions. It was like a modern-day viewing glass with x-ray capability or a night vision spectacle that could penetrate a veil to reveal the truth behind it.]

Verse no. 10: Oh scorcher of enemies! The great king Kubera has sent this medicated water so that you are able to see even invisible beings.

Verse no. 11: When this water has touched your eyes, you, and whoever else you give the water to, will be able to see all beings that are invisible."

12: तथेति रामस्तद्वारि प्रतिगृहयाथ सत्कृतम्

चकार नेत्रयोः शौचं लक्ष्मणश्च महामनाः

13: सुग्रीवजाम्बवन्तौ च हनूमानङ्गदस्तथा

मैन्ददिविदनीलाश्च प्रायः प्लवगसत्तमाः

14: तथा समभवच्चापि यदुवाच विभीषणः

क्षणेनातीन्द्रियाण्येषां चक्षूंष्यासन्युधिष्ठिर

12: tatheti rāmastadvāri pratigrhyātha satkṛtam
cakāra netrayoḥ śaucaṃ lakṣmaṇasca mahāmanāḥ

13: sugrīvajāmbavantau ca hanūmānaṅgadastathā
maindadvividanīlāsca prāyaḥ plavagasattamāḥ

14: tathā samabhavaccāpi yaduvāca vibhīṣaṇaḥ
kṣaṇenātīndriyāṇyeṣāṃ cakṣūṃṣyāsanyudhiṣṭhira

Verse no. 12: Lord Ram readily accepted this offer. He applied the consecrated water to his eyes, and then gave it to Laxman to do likewise.

Verse no. 13: After that, the consecrated water was passed around, and all the chief commanders applied it their own eyes. Some of the prominent ones were Sugriva, Jambavant, Hanuman, Angada, Mainda, Dvividā, Nila, and almost all the other chiefs amongst monkeys. Not only they, the water was then shared with other warriors on the battle-field so that they could see everything.

Verse no. 14: Sage Markandeya continued: "Oh Yudhishtira! The result was nothing but a miracle, and it happened just as Vibhishana had said. All the monkey and bear warriors could now see everything very clearly which had been invisible hitherto.

15: इन्द्रजित्कृतकर्मा तु पित्रे कर्म तदात्मनः

निवेद्य पुनरागच्छत्त्वरयाजिशिरः प्रति

16: तमापतन्तं संक्रुद्धं पुनरेव युयुत्सया

अभिदुद्राव सौमित्रिर्विभीषणमते स्थितः

17: अकृताह्निकमेवैनं जिघांसुर्जितकाशिनम्

शरैर्जघान संक्रुद्धः कृतसंज्ञोऽथ लक्ष्मणः

15: indrajitkṛtakarmā tu pitre karma tadātmanah
nivedya punarāgacchattvarayājīśiraḥ prati

16: tamāpatantaṁ saṁkruddhaṁ punareva yuyutsayā
abhidudrāva saumitrirvibhīṣaṇamate sthitah

17: akṛtāhnikamevainaṁ jighāṁsurjitakāśinam
śarairjaghāna saṁkruddhaḥ kṛtasamjñō'tha lakṣmaṇah

Verse no. 15: Meanwhile, having been successful in felling Lord Ram and Laxman in an unconscious state and then tying them up in a magical snare, Indrajit became very happy and proud. He went to his father Ravana and boasted about his achievements.

{Indrajit was now confident that with the two brothers firmly knocked out, it was just a matter of time before he would crush and defeat the rest of the enemy army, including its bravest of commanders, as they would either run away in fear for their own lives after seeing the fate of Lord Ram and Laxman, or face the same fate as the two brothers--fall down unconscious, and then get smothered, bludgeoned and trampled underfoot by his mighty demon warriors who were already baying for their blood.}

Hence, Inrajit went back to the battle-field, flush with victory, and fully confident of his abilities to trounce his enemies.

Verse no. 16: Desirous of battle to finish the remnants of the opposing army, Indrajit angrily advanced again to the battle-field. When Vibhishan saw Indrajit arrive, he advised Laxman to step forward and tackle the demon prince in such a way that his end comes soon.

Verse no. 17: He (Indrajit) was flush with victory and had not yet performed his daily rites. {To wit, Indrajit went straight to Ravana to report his success in felling Lord Ram and Laxman, and came back again straight to the battle-field after his meeting with his father. He did not even wash his face or relax for a moment.}

Laxman had by then fully recovered his senses as well as the ability to see behind the veil of delusions that Indrajit had cast on him and others earlier. Laxman was now so bitterly angry at Indrajit that he became very eager to settle scores with

the latter. So, advancing briskly, Laxman shot a hail of powerful and infallible arrows at Indrajit.

[Note--Indrajit had expected to see Lord Ram and Laxman lying on the ground, unconscious, and tied in his magical rope, with all the monkey warriors standing around them, distraught, terrified and grieving. But he met an unexpected sight--both Laxman and Lord Ram were up on their legs, hale and hearty, ready for battle, and all other warriors of the Lord's army were equally energetic and raring to fight viciously. Surely, Indrajit must have been shocked beyond measure; the ground beneath his feet seemed to shake and subside. He was so dazed and shocked that half of his earlier dare-devilry and energy sank within his; his mind swooned and went blank. Laxman took the initiative and speedily attacked Indrajit before the latter had time to recover from his shock. One of the reason why the end of Indrajit was so quick hereafter is that he could not fight with the vigour and confidence with which he had fought earlier. He was now tasting the fruit of his own cunning ways. All the tricks he may have tried hereafter, such as to become invisible to strike Laxman and others unnoticed, were riddled with self-doubt, and destined to fail under changed circumstances. All the warriors accompanying Laxman could now see him plain and clear. As a result, he became a direct target of coordinated assault by the monkey and bear warriors, as well as of Laxman's arrows. Obviously, there was no escape route for Indrajit now.]

18: तयोः समभवद्युद्धं तदान्योन्यं जिगीषतोः

अतीव चित्रमाश्चर्यं शक्रप्रह्लादयोरिव

19: अविध्यदिन्द्रजित्तीक्ष्णैः सौमित्रिं मर्मभेदिभिः

सौमित्रिश्चानलस्पर्शैरविध्यद्रावणिं शरैः

20: सौमित्रिशरसंस्पर्शाद्रावणिः क्रोधमूर्छितः

असृजल्लक्ष्मणायाष्टौ शरानाशीविषोपमान्

18: tayoh samabhavadyuddham tadānyonyaṃ jigīṣatoḥ
atīva citramāścaryaṃ śakraprahlādayoriva

19: avidhyadindrajittikṣṇaiḥ saumitriṃ marmabhedibhiḥ
saumitriścānalasparśairavidhyadrāvaṇiṃ śaraiḥ

20: saumitriśarasamsparsādrāvaṇiḥ krodhamūrchitaḥ
asrjallakṣmaṇāyāṣṭau śarānāśīviṣopamān

Verse no. 18: Each warrior wished to vanquish the other, and a fierce battle ensued between them. It was extremely extraordinary and a rare duel resembling the one that was once fought between Shakra (Indra) and Prahalad¹.

[Note—¹This example of two warriors of equal strength and valour fighting each other as exemplified by the battle between Indra and Prahalad has also been cited earlier in canto 270, verse no. 12. The story of the duel between Indra and Prahalad has also been appended as a note to the mentioned verse.]

Verse no. 19: Indrajit pierced Laxman with sharp arrows that penetrated the latter's body, and Laxman retaliated furiously by shooting sharp arrows with fiery tips at Indrajit that scorched the latter.

Verse no. 20: Peppered by Laxman's sharp arrows, Ravana's son was so furious with rage that he virtually lost his senses and acted rashly as if he was out of his mind. He discharged eight arrows rapidly at Laxman; these arrows were as virulent and vicious as poisonous serpents.

21: तस्यासून्पावकस्पर्शैः सौमित्रिः पत्रिभिस्त्रिभिः

यथा निरहरद्वीरस्तन्मे निगदतः शृणु

22: एकेनास्य धनुष्मन्तं बाहुं देहादपातयत्

द्वितीयेन सनाराचं भुजं भूमौ न्यपातयत्

23: तृतीयेन तु बाणेन पृथुधारेण भास्वता

जहार सुनसं चारु शिरो भ्राजिष्णुकुण्डलम्

21: tasyāsūnpāvakasparśaiḥ saumitriḥ patribhistribhiḥ
yathā niraharadvīraṣtanme nigadataḥ śṛṇu

22: ekenāśya dhanuṣmantam bāhuṁ dehādapātayat
dvitīyena sanārācam bhujaṁ bhūmau nyapātayat

23: tṛtīyena tu bāṇena pṛthudhāreṇa bhāsvatā
jahāra sunasaṁ cāru śiro bhrājiṣṇukunḍalam

Verse no. 21: Sage Markandeya told Yudhisthira: "Oh king! Listen carefully as I tell you how the brave Laxman finally killed Indrajit by shooting three feathered arrows that were like fire to the touch.

Verse no. 22: Through one of these, Laxman sliced-off the arm of Indrajit that wielded the bow. With the second arrow he severed Indrajit's arms that held the iron arrows, and the arm, still clutching these arrows, fell on the ground.

Verse no. 23: The third arrow was lustrous and wide, with a sickle shaped tip. With this, Laxman cut-off Indrajit's head which had prominent and well-shaped ears adorned with beautiful earrings. The severed head fell down on the ground.

[Note--The final duel between Indrajit and Laxman, and the former's death has been described also in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 75--to Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 76.]

24: विनिकृत्तभुजस्कन्धं कबन्धं भीमदर्शनम्

तं हत्वा सूतमप्यस्त्रैर्जघान बलिनां वरः

25: लङ्कां प्रवेशयामासुर्वाजिनस्तं रथं तदा
ददर्श रावणस्तं च रथं पुत्रविनाकृतम्

24: vinikṛtabhujaskandhaṃ kabandhaṃ bhīmadarśanam
taṃ hatvā sūtamapyastrairjaghāna balināṃ varaḥ

25: laṅkāṃ praveśayāmāsurvājinastaṃ rathaṃ tadā
dadarśa rāvaṇastaṃ ca rathaṃ putravinākṛtaṃ

Verse no. 24: The torso of Indrajit, with severed arms and head, looked exceptionally fearsome as it toppled from the chariot and fell down on the earth. Laxman then swiftly killed the charioteer too with his arrows.

[Note--Indrajit was of a gigantic form. So when his torso swayed and fell down on the ground, it shook the earth as if a mountain had toppled over. The monkeys and bears rushed here and there to avoid being crushed underneath.]

Verse no. 25: The horses dragged the empty chariot to Lanka where Ravana saw it. He was shocked to see the chariot empty, with no sign of his son Indrajit mounting it.

[Note--This sight left Ravana shocked and numbed; he was stunned and speechless for quite some time. Now it became too obvious to him that his time was up, and doom was staring him straight in his face. But now nothing could be done, and it was too late to retract and make amends. Indrajit was Ravana's bedrock of support and his favourite son who had been instrumental in spreading Ravana's quest for conquest of the world by sujugating even the gods on his father's commands--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182.

With the death of Indrajit, Ravana was left without any support. More than the emotional shock of losing a warrior son, it was the gloomy prospect of being alone during the thick of a do-or-die war, without anyone in his family to support him, that devastated Ravana more than any other thing. This tremendous shock had shook him internally so much that he lost his sense of judgement and prudence, as will be clear in what he hastily decided to do next as narrated in the verses that follow herein below.]

26: स पुत्रं निहतं दृष्ट्वा त्रासात्संभ्रान्तलोचनः

रावणः शोकमोहार्तो वैदेहीं हन्तुमुद्यतः

27: अशोकवनिकास्थां तां रामदर्शनलालसाम्

खड्गमादाय दुष्टात्मा जवेनाभिपपात ह

26: sa putraṃ nihataṃ dr̥ṣṭvā trāsātsaṃbhrāntalocaṇaḥ
rāvaṇaḥ śokamohārto vaidehīm hantumudyataḥ

27: aśokavanikāsthāṃ tāṃ rāmadarśanalālasām
khaḍgamādāya duṣṭātmā javenābhipapāta ha

Verse no. 26: Realising that his son Indrajit had been killed, Ravana was overcome by grief, and his eyes widened in fear. He was so angry and frustrated that he decided to kill Sita because he determined in his mind that she was the root cause of the calamity that had befallen upon Lanka and has virtually wiped out his clan.

Verse no. 27: Sita was in the Ashoka grove, sitting sad, forlorn and worried, hoping that she would soon see Lord Ram. The evil-souled Ravana, meanwhile, grasped a sword and rushed at her with a desire to get rid of her (i.e. to kill her)¹.

[Note--¹Ravana drawing his sword and rushing to Sita to kill her has been narrated in a different context in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 10. Here it is done prior to Hanuman's meeting Sita in the Ashoka grove, and in this case it was his wife Mandodari who had restrained him.]

28: तं दृष्ट्वा तस्य दुर्बुद्धेरविन्ध्यः पापनिश्चयम्
 शमयामास संक्रुद्धं श्रूयतां येन हेतुना
 29: महाराज्ये स्थितो दीप्ते न स्त्रियं हन्तुमर्हसि
 हतैवैषा यदा स्त्री च बन्धनस्था च ते गृहे
 30: न चैषा देहभेदेन हता स्यादिति मे मतिः
 जहि भर्तारमेवास्या हते तस्मिन्हता भवेत्
 31: न हि ते विक्रमे तुल्यः साक्षादपि शतक्रतुः
 असकृद्धि त्वया सेन्द्रास्त्रासितास्त्रिदशा युधि

28: taṁ dṛṣṭvā tasya durbuddheravindhyaḥ pāpaniścayam
 śamayāmāsa saṁkruddhaṁ śrūyatāṁ yena hetunā

29: mahārājye sthito dīpte na striyaṁ hantumarhasi
 hataivaiṣā yadā strī ca bandhanasthā ca te gr̥he

30: na caiṣā dehabhedena hatā syāditi me matiḥ
 jahi bhartāramevāsyā hate tasminhatā bhavet

31: na hi te vikrame tulyaḥ sāksādapi śatakratuḥ
 asakṛddhi tvayā sendrāstrāsitāstridaśā yudhi

Verse no. 28: Seeing that Ravana had become so mad in anger that he has lost all sense of propriety and wisdom by deciding to commit a heinous crime of killing a defenseless woman who is in his captivity, one of his advisors named Avindhya calmed him down by giving him the following reason to desist from taking any rash action--

Verse no. 29: Avindhya¹ told Ravana: "You are established as a great king. You should not kill a defenseless woman. This woman is a captive in your palace, and is already as good as dead. {This is because she has become very weak and thin by constant fasting and observing strict austerities, spending her time brooding and

worrying. Oh king--you will get no fame by killing her who is nothing but a skeleton. On the contrary, you will get infamy and ridicule in the world. The people would scorn at you, saying that you were a coward as you vented your ire on a helpless and hapless woman instead of using the strength of your arms in defeating her husband who had come to rescue her. So therefore, I pray to you to desist from such senseless and rash actions that you would repent in the long run.²}

[Note--¹Avindhya was a wise and righteous demon in the court of Ravana. Earlier, he had sent Trijata to assure Sita and tell her not to despair as her salvation would come soon--refer: canto 264, verse no. 55. He had even met her personally to tell her that one of Lord Ram's messenger named Hanuman would come to meet her--refer: canto 266, verse nos. 64-65.]

²Ravana thought for a moment and decided that Avindhya's advise was reasonable and held some weight. Truly, if he killed a hapless and helpless woman in his custody, it would be interpreted later on as nothing else but his cowardice. On the other hand, if he fought with her husband, Lord Ram, then either of two things would happen--one, he would defeat Lord Ram, in which case Sita would be forced to surrender herself to him or die too; and two, in case he himself is defeated and killed in battle, then history would remember him as a brave, courageous and manly demon king who did not yield to pressure or threat, or turned his back in the battle-field and ran away like a coward, but he fought valiantly till the end, and died honourably as a warrior should.]

Verse no. 30: In my view, she will not be killed through the destruction of her body. Kill her husband Lord Ram instead. When he is dead, she will be dead too.

Verse no. 31: Shatakratu (i.e. Indra, the king of gods) is not your equal in valour. In battle, you have made Indra and the thirty other gods tremble out of fear several times. So, just imagine how shameful it would be for you to kill a woman?¹"

[Note--¹The bravery of Ravana has been described in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-13 that precede it; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 27--to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

32: एवं बहुविधैर्वाक्यैरविन्ध्यो रावणं तदा

क्रुद्धं संशमयामास जगृहे च स तद्वचः

33: निर्याणे स मतिं कृत्वा निधायसिं क्षपाचरः

आज्ञापयामास तदा रथो मे कल्प्यतामिति

32: evaṃ bahuvidhairvākyaairavindhyo rāvaṇaṃ tadā
kruddhaṃ saṃśamayāmāsa jagṛhe ca sa tadvacaḥ

33: niryāṇe sa matiṃ kṛtvā nidhāyāsiṃ kṣapācaraḥ
ājñāpayāmāsa tadā ratho me kalpyatāmīti

Verse no. 32: With these and similar words, Avindhya pacified the angry Ravana who accepted this advice. {Ravana realised that there was weight in the logic of Avindhya and it made sense. Hence, he restrained himself.}

Verse no. 33: The demon king then resolved to march out to the battle-field himself. Having sheathed his sword, he instructed that his chariot should be prepared immediately."

[Note--Ravana's army was spectacular to behold as he marched in battle formation to the battle-field. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 78--to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 79.]

Thus ends Canto 273.

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Canto 274:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: ततः क्रुद्धो दशग्रीवः प्रिये पुत्रे निपातिते

निर्ययौ रथमास्थाय हेमरत्नविभूषितम्

2: संवृतो राक्षसैर्घोरैर्विविधायुधपाणिभिः

अभिदुद्राव रामं स पोथयन्हरियूथपान्

3: तमाद्रवन्तं संक्रुद्धं मैन्दनीलनलाङ्गदाः

हनुमाञ्जाम्बवांश्चैव ससैन्याः पर्यवारयन्

4: ते दशग्रीवसैन्यं तद्वक्षवानरयूथपाः

द्रुमैर्विध्वंसयां चक्रुर्दशग्रीवस्य पश्यतः

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: tataḥ kruddho daśagrīvaḥ priye putre nipātite
niryayau rathamāsthāya hemaratnavibhūṣitam

2: saṁvṛto rākṣasairghorairvividhāyudhapāṇibhiḥ
abhidudrāva rāmaṁ sa pothayanhariyūthapān

3: tamādravantam saṁkruddham maindanīlanalāṅgadāḥ
hanūmāñjāmbavāṁścaiva sasainyāḥ paryavārayan

4: te daśagrīvasainyaṁ tadrkṣavānarayūthapāḥ
drumairvidhvamṣayāṁ cakrurdaśagrīvasya paśyataḥ

{This canto narrates the final battle in Lanka between Ravana and his demon forces on one side, and Lord Ram and his forces of monkeys and bears on the opposite side. The battle was one of the most ferocious one during that war. A full and vivid

description of this epic battle has been described in all the many versions of the Ramayana, including Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79--to Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 84 (this marks the first day of the battle between Ravana and Lord Ram); (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 86--to Doha no. 98 (this marks the second day of the battle between Ravana and Lord Ram); (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 100--to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 103 (this marks the third day of the battle between Ravana and Lord Ram).

However, the Mahabharat, Ramopakhyan, presents a summarised version of the epic war. Canto no. 274 briefly describes the battle fought between the two great warriors--Lord Ram and Ravana, and ends with Ravana's death.

Meanwhile, during the thick of battle, the gods observed that while Ravana was riding a chariot, Lord Ram was on foot, which made it difficult for the Lord to face his enemy on equal terms and also hindered his movement and maneuvering on the battle-field. So, in order to help Lord Ram, Indra, the king of gods, sent his own chariot driven by Matali--verse nos. 12-14. {Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. that precede Doha no. 89.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "Angry at the death of his beloved son Indrajit, Dashagriva (i.e. the ten-necked, and hence ten-headed demon king Ravana) ascended his chariot and marched out, adorned in gold and gems.

Verse no. 2: He was surrounded by ferocious demon warriors, all armed with an assortment of powerful weapons held ready in their hands for an attack. Advancing rapidly, Ravana scattered all the monkey warriors who were manning the front lines of the army of Lord Ram (much like a strong breeze scatters dry leaves on the ground), and made a dash for Lord Ram.

Verse no. 3: While he was angrily advancing, Mainda, Nila, Nala, Angada, Hanuman (who were monkey commanders) and Jambavant (who led the forces consisting of bears), along with their soldiers, surrounded Ravana from all sides.

Verse no. 4: In full sight of Ravana, these monkey and bear warriors started decimating a major part of the demon army by thrashing the demon soldiers with tree trunks and other weapons.

5: ततः स्वसैन्यमालोक्य वध्यमानमरातिभिः

मायावी व्यदधान्मायां रावणो राक्षसेश्वरः

6: तस्य देहाद्विनिष्क्रान्ताः शतशोऽथ सहस्रशः

राक्षसाः प्रत्यदृश्यन्त शरशक्त्यृष्टिपाणयः

7: तान्नामो जघ्निवान्सर्वान्दिव्येनास्त्रेण राक्षसान्

अथ भूयोऽपि मायां स व्यदधाद्राक्षसाधिपः

8: कृत्वा रामस्य रूपाणि लक्ष्मणस्य च भारत

अभिदुद्राव रामं च लक्ष्मणं च दशाननः

5: tataḥ svasainyamālokyā vadhyamānamarātibhiḥ
māyāvī vyadadhānmāyāṃ rāvaṇo rākṣaseśvaraḥ

6: tasya dehādviniṣkrāntāḥ śataśo'tha sahasraśaḥ
rākṣasāḥ pratyadṛśyanta śaraśaktyrṣṭipāṇayaḥ

7: tānrāmo jaghnivānsarvāndivyenāstreṇa rākṣasān
atha bhūyo'pi māyāṃ sa vyadadhādrākṣasādhipaḥ

8: kṛtvā rāmasya rūpāṇi lakṣmaṇasya ca bhārata
abhidudrāva rāmaṃ ca lakṣmaṇaṃ ca daśānanaḥ

Verse no. 5: When Ravana, the lord of the demons, saw that his soldiers were being annihilated by the enemy, he resorted to Maya¹ in which he was skilled.

[Note--¹As has been explained earlier in the context of Indrajit's battles with the forces of Lord Ram, the word 'Maya' refers to the special powers of creating illusions that the demon king possessed that enabled him to delude his opponent by creating un-real scenarios that confounded his opponent in the battle-field.

Verse no. 6: Hundreds and thousands of demons were seen to emerge from his body. They held arrows, lances and swords in their hands.

Verse no. 7: But Lord Ram destroyed all those fake demons with his divine weapons. The lord of the demons then resorted to Maya again.

Verse no. 8: Using his magical powers to create delusions, the ten-headed demon king Ravana, conjured up numerous replicas of Lord Ram and Laxman, but all such forms were fake¹, although they looked exactly like the two original brothers who were descendants of the ancient king Bharat. Ravana had created these duplicate forms to confuse Lord Ram and Laxman as well as their troops. These fictitious forms were countless in numbers, and they rushed towards the two brothers, causing a lot of confusion and consternation to them.

[Note--¹This incident of Ravana using his illusion creating skills known as 'maya' to conjure up countless fake forms of Lord Ram and Laxman to confuse his enemies has also been narrated in Ram Charit Manas too, in its Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 89.]

9: ततस्ते राममर्छन्तो लक्ष्मणं च क्षपाचराः

अभिपेतुस्तदा राजन्प्रगृहीतोच्चकार्मुकाः

10: तां दृष्ट्वा राक्षसेन्द्रस्य मायामिक्ष्वाकुनन्दनः

उवाच रामं सौमित्रिरसंभ्रान्तो बृहद्वचः

11: जहीमान्नाक्षसान्पापानात्मनः प्रतिरूपकान्

जघान रामस्तांश्चान्यानात्मनः प्रतिरूपकान्

9: tataste rāmamarchanto lakṣmaṇaṃ ca kṣapācarāḥ
abhipetustadā rājanpragṛhītocakārmukāḥ

10: tāṃ drṣṭvā rākṣasendrasya māyāmikṣvākunandanah
uvāca rāmaṃ saumitirasaṃbhrānto bṛhadvacaḥ

11: jahīmānrākṣasānpāpānātmanah pratirūpakān
jaghāna rāmastāṃścānyānātmanah pratirūpakān

Verse no. 9: Sage Markandeya continued with his narration: "Oh king (Yudhisthira)! On reaching Lord Ram and Laxman, the demons warriors, famed as the stalkers of the night, descended on the two brothers from all sides, with long bows in their hands¹.

[Note--¹When we read this verse along with verse no. 8 herein above, the meaning becomes clear. Verse no. 8 says that Ravana created countless fictitious forms of Lord Ram and Laxman by using his powers of Maya to create illusions, and in the present verse no. 9 we read that countless demon warriors attacked the two brothers from all sides--obviously meaning that what Ravana actually did was to make his demon warriors look like the two brothers so that they can easily infiltrate into and break through the defense lines of the monkey and bear army and outflank them as its soldiers would think that these demons were Lord Ram and Laxman, thereby allowing them easy entry.]

Verse no. 10: On witnessing the Maya of Ravana, who was like Indra (the king of gods) in the demon race, Laxman, the descendant of the Ikshvaku lineage, remained calm and composed (because he knew what the reality was). He spoke to Lord Ram confidently to reassure him that all these forms were fake, and they have been created by Ravana to confuse them (i.e. to mislead Lord Ram, Laxman and the rest of their army so that they would not know who is a foe and who is a friend).

Verse no. 11: Laxman exhorted Lord Ram: "Oh Lord, kill these demons who are disguised as you and me. {Ravana has employed his magical tricks to make us believe that all these figures that you see are not demons, but so many Rams and Laxmans. Please don't be taken for a ride by this trick. Slay them as fast as you can.}"

When Laxman alerted Lord Ram about the reality, the Lord wasted no time to cut through this illusion and slay all the attacking demons who appeared to resemble him².

[Note--²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 89 which describes this event.]

12: ततो हर्यश्वयुक्तेन रथेनादित्यवर्चसा
उपतस्थे रणे रामं मातलिः शक्रसारथिः

12: tato haryaśvayuktena rathenādityavarcaśā
upatasthe raṇe rāmaṃ mātaliḥ śakrasārathiḥ

Verse no. 12: Then, in that field of battle, Shakra's (i.e. Indra's) charioteer named Matali arrived before Lord Ram. He had brought Indra's chariot to help the Lord in the battle-field. The chariot was as radiant as the sun, and it had skilled and swift war-horses yoked to it¹.

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 89.]

13: मातलिरुवाच

13: अयं हर्यश्वयुगजैत्रो मघोनः स्यन्दनोत्तमः

अनेन शक्रः काकुत्स्थ समरे दैत्यदानवान्

शतशः पुरुषव्याघ्र रथोदारेण जघ्निवान्

14: तदनेन नरव्याघ्र मया यत्तेन संयुगे

स्यन्दनेन जहि क्षिप्रं रावणं मा चिरं कृथाः

13: mātāliruvāca

13: ayaṃ haryaśvayugjaitro maghonaḥ syandanottamaḥ
anena śakraḥ kākutstha samare daityadānavān
śataśaḥ puruṣavyāghra rathodāreṇa jaghnivān

14: tadanena naravyāghra mayā yattena saṃyuge
syandanena jahi kṣipraṃ rāvaṇaṃ mā ciraṃ kṛthāḥ

Verse no. 13: Matali said to Lord Ram: "This is the supreme chariot that belongs to Maghavan (the Lord of the rains; i.e. Indra, the king of gods) himself. It is named Jaitra and is yoked to skilled, muscular and well-trained war horses. Oh Kakutstha (Lord Ram)! Thou art like a tiger amongst brave men! Shakra (Indra) had used this splendid chariot in the war against the daityas and danavas (i.e. demons of various denominations) and had killed them in their hundreds.

Verse no. 14: Oh tiger amongst men (naravyāghra)! Swiftly get on this chariot that would be driven by me in battle, and use it to defeat Ravana in the battle-field just as Indra had used it to defeat and slay hundreds of demons in battle earlier. Oh Lord, do not delay."

15: त्युक्तो राघवस्तथ्यं वचोऽशङ्कत मातलेः

मायेयं राक्षसस्येति तमुवाच विभीषणः

16: नेयं माया नरव्याघ्र रावणस्य दुरात्मनः

तदातिष्ठ रथं शीघ्रमिममैन्द्रं महाद्युते

15: tyukto rāghavastathyaṃ vaco'saṅkata mātaleḥ
māyeyaṃ rākṣasasyeti tamuvāca vibhīṣaṇaḥ

16: neyaṃ māyā naravyāghra rāvaṇasya durātmanah
tadātiṣṭha rathaṃ śīghramimamaindraṃ mahādyute

Verse no. 15: When Lord Ram heard the charioteer Matali's words, he became suspicious, thinking that this might be some other kind of Maya of Ravana in order to trap him. But Vibhishan, who knew all the tricks that Ravana could play as he was the latter's brother and privy to all his secrets, told Lord Ram:--

Verse no. 16: "Oh tiger amongst men (naravyāghra)! This is not the Maya of the evil-souled Ravana that you think it to be. Have no doubt and second thoughts about the originality and authenticity of this splendid chariot that shines like the sun (mahādyute) as being of Indra's. So, please mount it swiftly without having any hesitation."

17: ततः प्रहृष्टः काकुत्स्थस्तथेत्युक्त्वा विभीषणम्
रथेनाभिपपाताशु दशग्रीवं रुषान्वितः

18: हाहाकृतानि भूतानि रावणे समभिद्रुते
सिंहनादाः सपटहा दिवि दिव्याश्च नानदन्

17: tataḥ prahrṣṭaḥ kākutsthastathetyuktvā vibhīṣaṇam
rathenaḥhipapātāśu daśagrīvaṃ ruṣānvitaḥ

18: hāhākṛtāni bhūtāni rāvaṇe samabhidrute
siṃhanādāḥ sapataḥ divi divyāśca nānadan

Verse no. 17: Delighted and feeling reassured, Kakutstha (i.e. Lord Ram) thanked Vibhishan and told him that he would act accordingly. Thereafter, the Lord mounted the chariot and angrily advanced towards Dashagriva (the ten-necked and ten-headed Ravana).

Verse no. 18: When Ravana saw Lord Ram astride a magnificent chariot that was more splendid than his, he (filled with jealousy, and angry at Indra for providing the Lord with his personal chariot) advanced menacingly towards the Lord. At that time, all living beings on earth began to lament and wonder as to what would happen next. The gods, however, roared like lions in heaven and beat their drums¹.

[Note--¹The gods realised that the final hour of the end of Ravana has arrived. He had been recklessly tormenting not only the gods but all living beings in this world. The gods had for long wished to see Ravana's end*, and when their dream of seeing an end to the demons' evil rule was about to become a reality, it was natural for them to celebrate and rejoice. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Sortha no. 183; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 184; and (iii) Doha no. 186--to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 187.}]

19: स रामाय महाघोरं विससर्ज निशाचरः

शूलमिन्द्राशनिप्रख्यं ब्रह्मदण्डमिवोदयतम्

20: तच्छूलमन्तरा रामश्चिच्छेद निशितैः शरैः

तद्दृष्ट्वा दुष्करं कर्म रावणं भयमाविशत्

19: sa rāmāya mahāghoraṃ visasarja niśācaraḥ

śūlamindrāśaniprakhyaṃ brahmadanḍamivodyatam

20: tacchūlamantarā rāmaściccheda niśitaiḥ śaraiḥ

taddr̥ṣṭvā duṣkaraṃ karma rāvaṇaṃ bhayamāviśat

Verse no. 19: Then the dreadful Niśācara (literally those who move around or stalk in the night—i.e. the demon Ravana) hurled a fiery spear at Lord Ram. It resembled the powerful weapon of Indra that is known as 'vajra' (thunderbolt), as well as the mighty raised 'staff' or the 'mace', of the creator Brahma (that he could use to crush anything or anyone he wished).

Verse no. 20: Lord Ram, however, easily cut that spear (that was like a javelin) down with sharp arrows. When Ravana observed how the spear was sliced into two by Lord Ram with the use of his arrows, he became very despaired and was overcome by fear.

{This is because Ravana's spear, obviously, was no ordinary spear; it was heavy, strong, powerful, dynamic, and shot with a great force. To neutralise it was no joke. That Lord Ram could easily break it by striking it with a precision arrow made Ravana terrified as, by now, he was quite certain that his adversary was no ordinary warrior but a powerful and versatile opponent the like of whom he had not met earlier in his life. The Lord, Ravana grudgingly realised, was capable of tackling all kinds of tricks he knew, and was also equally capable of neutralising all kinds of weapons he had in his arsenal.}

21: ततः क्रुद्धः ससर्जाशु दशग्रीवः शिताञ्शरान्

सहस्रायुतशो रामे शस्त्राणि विविधानि च

22: ततो भुशुण्डीः शूलांश्च मुसलानि परश्वधान्

शक्तीश्च विविधाकाराः शतघ्नीश्च शितक्षुराः

21: tataḥ kruddhaḥ sasarjāśu daśagrīvaḥ śitāñśarān

sahasrāyutaśo rāme śastrāṇi vividhāni ca

22: tato bhuśuṇḍīḥ śūlāṃśca musalāni paraśvadhān

śaktiśca vividhākārāḥ śataghñīśca śitakṣurāḥ

Verse no. 21: The ten-necked and ten-headed Ravana (daśagrīvaḥ) was so vehement with anger that he shot thousands and tens of thousands of sharp arrows and other kinds of weapons at Lord Ram.

Verse no. 22: These weapons were of various denominations, such as bhushundis (a sort of missile; a kind of firearm with an explosive tip), tridents, clubs, battle-axes, different kinds of spears, shataghnis (a chained iron ball with spikes; it is swung around to strike at the enemy violently and dash him down), and arrows that were sharp as razors. All these weapons had deadly punch and were capable of inflicting mortal wounds on the enemy.

23: तां मायां विकृतां दृष्ट्वा दशग्रीवस्य रक्षसः

भयात्प्रदुद्रुवुः सर्वे वानराः सर्वतोदिशम्

24: ततः सुपत्रं सुमुखं हेमपुङ्खं शरोत्तमम्

तूणादादाय काकुत्स्थो ब्रह्मास्त्रेण युयोज ह

23: tāṃ māyāṃ vikṛtāṃ dr̥ṣṭvā daśagrīvasya rakṣasaḥ
bhayātpradudruvuh̐ sarve vānarāḥ sarvatodiśam

24: tataḥ supatraṃ sumukhaṃ hemapuṅkhaṃ śarottamam
tūṇādādāya kākutstho brahmāstreṇa yuyoja ha

Verse no. 23: On seeing the volley of weapons shot by Ravana as well as the numerous illusions he had created in the battle-field by using his ability to throw a veil of maya (deception) on everyone confronting him so as to deceive and mislead his opponents who were so much deluded that they imagined seeing things that were not real, the monkeys (and bears) were so overwhelmed with fear that they fled in all the directions.

{These monkey and bear warriors thought that all the weapons shot by Ravana were real, that there was no limit to the number and kind of deadly missiles landing on them to kill them instantly, and that the demon forces were much larger and stronger than their own. This illusion was created by Ravana to instil terror in the army of Lord Ram, for he realised that his own army of demons had been almost decimated, and therefore if he didn't use tricks then he stood little chance of having an upper hand on the enemy. This was his strategy. It was the result of the knowledge of 'maya' and how to employ it to confuse others that he was an expert in.}

Verse no. 24: At that, Kakutstha (i.e. Lord Ram) took a powerful and empowered it specially by invoking some esoteric mantras (mystical formulae) that made this arrow as potent, powerful, invincible, deadly and effective as the weapon of the creator Brahma (brahmāstreṇa). This arrow was excellent in every way (śarottamam), had a golden shaft, and it shone brilliantly from its tip to its rear.

25: तं बाणवर्यं रामेण ब्रह्मास्त्रेणाभिमन्त्रितम्

जहृषुर्देवगन्धर्वा दृष्ट्वा शक्रपुरोगमाः

26: अल्पावशेषमायुश्च ततोऽमन्यन्त रक्षसः

ब्रह्मास्त्रोदीरणाच्छत्रोर्देवगन्धर्वकिनराः

25: taṃ bāṇavaryaṃ rāmeṇa brahmāstreṇābhimantritam
jahṛṣurdevagandharvā dṛṣṭvā śakrapurogamāḥ

26: alpāvaśeṣamāyusca tato manyanta rakṣasaḥ
brahmāstrodīraṇācchatrordevagandharvakinnarāḥ

Verse no. 25: When Lord Ram invoked mystical mantras to empower the arrow with superior powers that transformed it into a 'brahmastra' (an infallible missile that is sure to attain its objective; literally the weapon of Brahma, the creator), and then fixed it to his bow, there was an applause in the heaven as all the gods and the gandharvas, led by Indra, the king of gods, who were witnessing the battle, cheered and rejoiced.

Verse no. 26: With the invocation of brahmastra, all the gods, gandharvas and kinnaras were certain that the demon king (Ravana) had only a short span of life left now.

27: ततः ससर्ज तं रामः शरमप्रतिमौजसम्
रावणान्तकरं घोरं ब्रह्मदण्डमिवोद्यतम्
28: स तेन राक्षसश्रेष्ठः सरथः साश्वसारथिः
प्रज्ज्वाल महाज्वालेनाग्निनाभिपरिष्कृतः

27: tataḥ sasarja taṃ rāmaḥ śaramapratimaujasam
rāvaṇāntakaraṃ ghoram brahmadandamivodyatam

28: sa tena rākṣasaśreṣṭhaḥ sarathaḥ sāśvasārathiḥ
prajajvāla mahājvālenāgninābhipariṣkṛtaḥ

Verse no. 27: Lord Ram then released the arrow, unmatched in its energy and power because now it had been transformed into a brahmastra. It resembled Brahma's raised staff or mace, and was destined to kill Ravana.

Verse no. 28: This arrow spewed bright flames as it slammed into Ravana's chariot, instantly enveloping it, its horses and charioteer, as well as its rider, the famous demon king Ravana, in a mighty blaze of fire, with flames leaping in all directions and burning everything in the vicinity¹.

[Note--¹This fiery arrow shot by Lord Ram was something like a modern-day missile tipped with a nuclear warhead, but with a big difference. What is it? In modern times, if a nuclear warhead is detonated, the surrounding area much beyond the specific target not only gets scorched but also contaminated so much that all forms of life is annihilated. Surely, science was much more developed or evolved in that so-called remote period in an ancient era, because though Lord Ram's fiery arrow exploded into a gigantic fireball as it slammed into Ravana's chariot, incinerating everything, much like a nuclear missile would do in today's war, but it did not pollute or contaminate the surroundings, nor did it annihilate any life in the battle-field other than killing those who were meant to be killed--i.e. Ravana, his charioteer, and his horses. Obviously, the chariot disintegrated immediately in this hellish ball of fire, so of

course nothing was left. But however, none of the monkeys and bears who were surrounding Ravana and Lord Ram from all sides, nor were the demon soldiers who too were in huge numbers, were killed or harmed.]

29: ततः प्रहृष्टास्त्रिदशाः सगन्धर्वाः सचारणाः

निहतं रावणं दृष्ट्वा रामेणाक्लिष्टकर्मणा

30: तत्यजुस्तं महाभागं पञ्च भूतानि रावणम्

भ्रंशितः सर्वलोकेषु स हि ब्रह्मास्त्रतेजसा

31: शरीरधातवो ह्यस्य मांसं रुधिरमेव च

नेशुर्ब्रह्मास्त्रनिर्दग्धा न च भस्माप्यदृश्यत

29: tataḥ prahrṣṭāstridaśāḥ sagandharvāḥ sacāraṇāḥ
nihataṃ rāvaṇaṃ dṛṣṭvā rāmeṇākliṣṭakarmanā

30: tatyajustaṃ mahābhāgaṃ pañca bhūtāni rāvaṇam
bhraṃśitaḥ sarvalokeṣu sa hi brahmāstratejasā

31: śarīradhātavo hyasya māṃsaṃ rudhirameva ca
neśurbrahmāstranirdagdhā na ca bhasmāpyadrśyata

Verse no. 29: Then all the gods of the three worlds (such as the heaven, the earth, and the subterranean world), together with the gandharvas and the charanas (court singers of the heaven), were delighted to see that Ravana had been killed by Lord Ram who was righteous in his deeds and actions.

[Note--Lord Ram's actions and deeds were lawful and free from taint because he was fighting this war to free his wife Sita who had been unlawfully kidnapped and subjected to torments by the demon king Ravana. Lord Ram would be censored by the world if he had not made any attempt to free Sita. The Lord had even sent Angad as his emissary to Ravana in an attempt to make peace and persuade the demon king to return his wife Sita so that a bloody war could be avoided. So therefore, Lord Ram cannot be accused of waging an unwarranted war and causing a bloodbath for no rhyme or reason. The Lord was not fighting this war to expand his empire or to loot his rich neighbouring country, or to subjugate another king to make the latter his vassal. It was a war fought for a right cause, and in a war, blood is spilled, even if one does not want to willingly do so.]

Verse no. 30: The five subtle elements¹ departed from the physical body of Ravana who was very fortunate². The powerful energy of the brahmastra had reduced his body to ashes in the battle-field.

[Note—¹The ‘five subtle elements’ refer to the basic ingredients of life in this world. They are air, water, earth, fire and space or sky. To say that the five elements left Ravana’s body, it is simply meant that all life-forces left him, and so he died.

²Ravana has been described as being 'immensely fortunate' because of the following reasons: (i) He had died like a brave warrior--dying in the battle-field while fighting his enemy till the last breath in his body. He did not run away, nor did he make a compromise. (ii) Lord Ram was no ordinary human being; he was a manifestation of the Supreme Being. Every living being who has taken birth in this mortal world has to die one day or the other. But surely it is a great privilege for someone if the Supreme Being himself comes up to him and ensures he dies before his eyes, with the Lord standing right before the dying person. That Ravana was extremely fortunate in this, that he had obtained liberation from the cycle of birth and death, and that his soul had attained final deliverance, emancipation and salvation is proved by the fact that when he died, his soul emerged from his physical body in the form of a bright spark and straight away entered the body of Lord Ram--as a signal of Ravana's soul merging with and becoming one with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram.

It was a spectacular sight that left all those who had witnessed it happen, amazed. Truly, Ravana had attained a destiny that is quite rare for even great sages and hermits to attain, for rarely would one die with the Supreme Being himself standing right in front and helping the person shed his mortal body to free his soul. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; (ii) Doha no. 104 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.

Even the gods were amazed at this remarkable feat of Ravana and grudgingly acknowledged that he was very fortunate in his death, for his soul had found its permanent rest and final deliverance by merging with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 110.]

Verse no. 31: The mortal, physical ingredients of his body, such as his flesh, bones, skin and blood, were scorched and burnt so much by the fierce fire of the brahmastra that even the ashes could not be seen¹."

[Note--¹Every part of Ravana's body was incinerated so much that nothing remained. In fact, as has been said in previous verse no. 28 herein above, the arrow had burnt the chariot, the horses, the charioteer and Ravana simultaneously. It was not possible therefore to distinguish in the heap of the burnt remains which part was of Ravana's body, or of his horses, his charioteer, and of the chariot itself. The temperature was so high and incineration so complete that nothing remained. Even if a handful of ashes remained, it simply was not possible to say which part of it was exclusively of Ravana's body.]

Thus ends Canto 274.

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Canto 275:

1: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

1: स हत्वा रावणं क्षुद्रं राक्षसेन्द्रं सुरदिवषम्

बभूव हृष्टः ससुहृद्रामः सौमित्रिणा सह

2: ततो हते दशग्रीवे देवाः सर्षिपुरोगमाः
 आशीर्भिर्जययुक्ताभिरानर्चुस्तं महाभुजम्
 3: रामं कमलपत्राक्षं तुष्टुवुः सर्वदेवताः
 गन्धर्वाः पुष्पवर्षैश्च वाग्भिश्च त्रिदशालयाः

1: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

1: sa hatvā rāvaṇaṃ kṣudraṃ rākṣasendraṃ suradviṣaṃ
 babhūva hr̥ṣṭaḥ sasuhṛdrāmaḥ saumitriṇā saha

2: tato hate daśagrīve devāḥ sarṣipurogamāḥ
 āśīrbhirjayayuktābhirānarcustaṃ mahābhujam

3: rāmaṃ kamalapatrākṣaṃ tuṣṭuvuḥ sarvadevatāḥ
 gandharvāḥ puṣpavarṣaiśca vāgbhiśca tridaśālayāḥ

{In this final canto of Mahabharat's 'Ramopakhyān', sage Markandeya narrates the events that followed the death of Ravana. In brief, Sita was freed from captivity and was re-united with Lord Ram, after which the Lord mounted the Pushpak air plane which Ravana had snatched from Kuber earlier, along with Sita, his brother Laxman, chief commanders of the monkeys and bears, such as Hanuman, Angad, Sugriv and Jamawant etc., along with his demon friend Vibhishan and his own company of trusted demon ministers. Then the Lord headed home to Ayodhya where he and his party received a rousing and tumultuous welcome.

In this canto's beginning, however, Lord Ram wished to make it clear to the world that Sita remained pure and immaculate inspite of remaining in Ravana's captivity for so long. All the chief gods, led by the creator Brahma, and including in the group the fire-god, the wind-god, the water-god, as well as the seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-rishis, vouched for Sita's integrity and loyalty. They assured Lord Ram that Sita had an untainted character, and no doubts or aspersions of any kind should be cast on her. Even Sita made a vow that if there is a trace of corruption in her, then let the life sustaining elements such as the wind exit from her body, let the fire element burn her body. Even king Dashrath, Lord Ram's father who lived in the heaven in the form of a spirit, came to stand witness for Sita, advising his son, Lord Ram, not to doubt her, and instead proceed with her to Ayodhya to take over the reigns of the kingdom--i.e. ascend the throne that had been lying vacant ever since Dashrath's death, with Bharat only acting as a temporary care-taker.

At this juncture, the gods asked Lord Ram for any boon that he desired to have. The Lord said that he should always remain steadfast on the path of Dharma, should have victory over his enemies, and that all the monkey and bear warriors who have died for his cause be brought back to life. Of course, all his desired boons were granted.

Meanwhile, Sita was so grateful to Hanuman that she granted him a personal boon--that for all times to come, and for as long as Lord Ram's name is remembered in this world, Hanuman should also live for that length of time.

The party then mounted the Pushpak plane and headed home to Ayodhya via the air route.

After the coronation ceremony of Lord Ram, all his friends from Kishkindha (Sugriv, Angad, Jamwant and other chief monkeys and bears, as well as from Lanka, such as Vibhishan and others, were honoured and sent back to their respective kingdoms.

The canto closes by mentioning that Lord Ram had performed ten horse sacrifices and gave immense amounts of donation after ascending the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya.}

Verse no. 1: Markandeya said: "Having killed the evil demon king Ravana, who was like Indra (the king of gods) in the demon race as well as an arch enemy of Indra and other gods, Lord Ram, along with Laxman (Soumitri), was extremely delighted.

Verse no. 2: After Dashagriva, the ten-necked and ten-headed Ravana, was slain, the jubilant gods, accompanied by great sages, lavishly praised Lord Ram as the great hero who used his mightily strong arms to get rid of the fearful demon king's menace. They all joined in applauding the victory of Lord Ram over their tormentor (Ravana).

Verse no. 3: Not only the gods, but other celestial beings such as the gandharvas and other residents of heaven, also joined in praising the lotus-eyed Lord Ram for his victory of the evil demon. To thank the Lord, and to show their happiness and express gratitude towards the Lord, all of them, the gods, the sages, the gandharvas and other celestial beings, showered flowers upon him from the heaven (sky) where they stood (with folded hands)¹.

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 10-11 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 103; (ii) Doha no. 110.]

4: पूजयित्वा यथा रामं प्रतिजग्मुर्यथागतम्
तन्महोत्सवसंकाशमासीदाकाशमच्युत
5: ततो हत्वा दशग्रीवं लङ्कां रामो महायशाः
विभीषणाय प्रददौ प्रभुः परपुरंजयः

4: pūjayitvā yathā rāmaṃ pratijagmuryathāgatam
tanmahotsavasamkāśamāsīdākāśamacyuta

5: tato hatvā daśagrīvaṃ laṅkāṃ rāmo mahāyaśāḥ
vibhīṣaṇāya pradadau prabhuḥ parapuramjayah

Verse no. 4: Having thus honoured Lord Ram, all these immortal beings of heaven then returned to their respective abodes. There was a festival-like atmosphere in the heaven, where there was widespread rejoicing and celebrations.

Verse no. 5: Having killed Dashagriva and attaining victory over Lanka, Lord Ram handed over the reigns of the city and the kingdom to Vibhishan¹.

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.]

6: ततः सीतां पुरस्कृत्य विभीषणपुरस्कृताम्
 अविन्ध्यो नाम सुप्रज्ञो वृद्धामात्यो विनिर्ययौ
 7: उवाच च महात्मानं काकुत्स्थं दैन्यमास्थितम्
 प्रतीच्छ देवीं सद्वृत्तां महात्मञ्जानकीमिति
 8: एतच्छ्रुत्वा वचस्तस्मादवतीर्य रथोत्तमात्
 बाष्पेणापिहितां सीतां ददर्शैक्वाकुनन्दनः
 9: तां दृष्ट्वा चारुसर्वाङ्गीं यानस्थां शोककर्षिताम्
 मलोपचितसर्वाङ्गीं जटिलां कृष्णवाससम्

6: tataḥ sītāṃ puraskṛtya vibhīṣaṇapuraskṛtām
 avindhyo nāma suprajño vṛddhāmātyo viniryayau

7: uvāca ca mahātmānaṃ kākutsthaṃ dainyamāsthitaṃ
 pratīccha devīm sadvṛttāṃ mahātmañjānakīmiti

8: etacchrutvā vacastasmādavatīrya rathottamāt
 bāṣṇepāpihitāṃ sītāṃ dadarśekṣvākunandanaḥ

9: tāṃ dr̥ṣṭvā cārusarvāṅgīm yānasthām śokakarśitām
 malopacitasarvāṅgīm jaṭilām kṛṣṇavāsasam

Verse no. 6: The immensely wise and aged adviser Avindhya then came before Lord Ram along with Sita, with Vibhishan leading the way.

Verse no. 7: With great humility, he told the great and honourable Kakutstha (Lord Ram): "Oh honourable Lord! Please accept Sita (Janaki) who is like a goddess--righteous, pure, immaculate and respectful in all possible ways. She has a character that is untainted."

Verse no. 8: Hearing these words of Avindhya, the descendant of the Ikshvaku lineage (i.e. Lord Ram) descended from his magnificent chariot*. He looked at Sita, who was enveloped in tears. {*This chariot was sent by Indra to help Lord Ram in the battle-field. It was driven by Matali.}

Verse no. 9: In spite of her emaciated and weak physical condition (arising out of long captivity and grief), Sita still looked charming. She was seated on a vehicle, but by her expressions it was obvious that grief and long-lasting distress over her fate have had a negative effect on her. All her limbs were covered with dirt. Her hair was matted. She was attired in a black garment.

10: उवाच रामो वैदेहीं परामर्शविशङ्कितः
 गच्छ वैदेहि मुक्ता त्वं यत्कार्यं तन्मया कृतम्

11: मामासाद्य पतिं भद्रे न त्वं राक्षसवेश्मनि
जरां व्रजेथा इति मे निहतोऽसौ निशाचरः

12: कथं ह्यस्मद्विधो जातु जानन्धर्मविनिश्चयम्
परहस्तगतां नारीं मुहूर्तमपि धारयेत्

13: सुवृत्तामसुवृत्तां वाप्यहं त्वामद्य मैथिलि
नोत्सहे परिभोगाय श्वावलीढं हविर्यथा

10: uvāca rāmo vaidehīm parāmarśaviśaṅkitāḥ
gaccha vaidehi muktā tvaṃ yatkāryaṃ tanmayā kṛtam

11: māmāsādya patiṃ bhadre na tvaṃ rākṣasaveśmani
jarāṃ vrajethā iti me nihato'sau niśācaraḥ

12: kathaṃ hyasmadvidho jātu jānandharmaviniścayam
parahastagatāṃ nārīm muhūrtamapi dhārayet

13: suvṛttāmasuvṛttāṃ vāpyahaṃ tvāmadya maithili
notsahe paribhogāya śvāvaliḍhaṃ haviryathā

Verse no. 10: On seeing her, Lord Ram was concerned that Sita may be regarded by the world as tainted because she had been in his custody of Ravana for so long, and there was a probability of demon king having touched her with an evil intent, even if it was against her wishes.

Thus, showing his scepticism, Lord Ram told her: "Oh Vaidehi! Now you are free from your captivity. You can choose where to go (and with whom to live). I have done my duty. {As an honourable man, it was my duty and moral obligation to help a woman in distress, a woman who had been forcibly taken away from her husband while he was away on some errand. This duty I have now fulfilled. The world is a witness of it.}

Verse no. 11: Oh honourable lady (bhadre)! You once had me as a husband, and therefore, I did not think that you should grow old in the house of that evil demon king (Ravana). Hence, I killed the 'stalker of the night' (niśācaraḥ). {I thought that it would be totally against principles of Dharma for a husband to tolerate and allow his wife to live in another person's house. This was the reason, being an upholder of Dharma and honouring its tenets to the last letter, I decided to free you from the captivity of the vile demon king Ravana. Now that my main objective has been achieved, I set you free to go anywhere you like.}

Verse no. 12: How can a man like me, who knows the ways of Dharma and is a strict upholder of its edicts, accept a woman, even for an instant, who has been held in another man's captivity for so long a time?

Verse no. 13: Oh Maithili, I am really sorry! Whether you are of good conduct or evil conduct, I no longer have any interest in enjoying your company now. You are like oblations made to the fire that have been licked, and hence defiled, by a dog¹. {I

would rather prefer to spend the rest of my life without a wife than to suffer humiliation on this count.}"

[Note-- Here, Ravana is referred to as a 'dog' who had 'defiled' Sita by touching her. According to principles of Dharma as observed in conservative household that adhere to the traditions of Hinduism, a woman, once married, should not be touched by any other man except her husband. So, Lord Ram was forced to express his reservations to avoid any chance of future gossip and smear campaign by his enemies.

In Ram Charit Manas, this sombre and sad moment of Lord Ram expressing his reservations about the purity of Sita has been succinctly mentioned in its Lanka Kand, Doha no. 108 along with Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes it. Here it is said that privately the Lord wished to come out clean, both for himself as well as on Sita's behalf, by saying something that the Lord knew very well the world would say later on, some day or the other. So, why not settle the matter right in the beginning, once and for all.]

14: ततः सा सहसा बाला तच्छ्रुत्वा दारुणं वचः

पपात देवी व्यथिता निकृता कदली यथा

15: यो ह्यस्या हर्षसंभूतो मुखरागस्तदाभवत्

क्षणेन स पुनर्भ्रष्टो निःश्वासादिव दर्पणे

14: tataḥ sā sahasā bālā tacchrutvā dāruṇaṁ vacaḥ
papāta devī vyathitā nikṛtā kadālī yathā

15: yo hyasyā harṣasaṁbhūto mukharāgastadābhavat
kṣaṇena sa punarbhraṣṭo niḥśvāsādiva darpaṇe

Verse no. 14: On hearing these harsh words, the young goddess (Sita) was horrified. She suddenly fainted out of shock, and fell down on the ground like a severed plantain tree.

Verse no. 15: Her face, which had been flush with delight a moment earlier, suddenly lost its colour as she became pale. Her happiness and joy vanished into thin air just like the thin film of moisture that is formed on a mirror when one breathes too close to it¹.

[Note--¹Her face was like a mirror that reflected her extreme feeling of distress and anguish when she heard Lord Ram's harsh words. She was for a rude shock. She had expected that her husband would greet her warmly and rush forward to welcome her back. But instead she found him making such unfounded and wild allegations against her. Any person in Sita's place would have felt the pang of utter grief and extreme despair that gripped her whole being at that moment like a sudden bout of shivering and trembling and convulsions that afflicts a person who has been bitten by a poisonous snake.]

16: ततस्ते हरयः सर्वे तच्छ्रुत्वा रामभाषितम्

गतासुकल्पा निश्चेष्टा बभूवुः सहलक्ष्मणाः

17: ततो देवो विशुद्धात्मा विमानेन चतुर्मुखः

पितामहो जगत्स्रष्टा दर्शयामास राघवम्

18: शक्रश्चाग्निश्च वायुश्च यमो वरुण एव च

यक्षाधिपश्च भगवांस्तथा सप्तर्षयोऽमलाः

16: tataste harayaḥ sarve tacchrutvā rāmahāṣitam
gatāsukalpā niśceṣṭā babhūvuḥ sahalakṣmaṇāḥ

17: tato devo viśuddhātmā vimānena caturmukhaḥ
pitāmaho jagatsraṣṭā darśayāmāsa rāghavam

18: śakraścāgniśca vāyuśca yamo varuṇa eva ca
yakṣādhipaśca bhagavāṁstathā saptarṣayo'malāḥ

Verse no. 16: Hearing these unwarranted words spoken by Lord Ram, Laxman and all the monkeys who were standing around, were numbed with shock; they stood motionless as if life had left their bodies.

Verse no. 17: Then the grandfather of creation, the four-faced Brahma who was pure in heart as he never spoke a lie or took sides, quickly arrived in his celestial chariot and descended from heaven to appear in the sky before Lord Ram.

Verse no. 18: Like him, other gods such as did Indra (the king of gods), Agni (the fire-god), Vayu (the wind-god), Yama (the god controlling justice and hell), Varuna (the water-god), Kuber (the illustrious lord of the Yakshas), as well as the holy seven sages known as the 'Saptarishis'¹ too came to stand in the sky before Lord Ram (and vouch on behalf of Sita, and stand witness for her purity and immaculacy of character).

{All these gods and sages had, a little while ago, praised Lord Ram for his victory over Ravana, and were heading to their respective abodes in the distant part of the heaven--refer: verse nos. 2-4 herein above. But soon this bad news reached them that Sita had fainted when Lord Ram made harsh comments against her character. All the gods immediately turned around and hastily returned to meet the Lord before any new calamity unfolded. The gods have exceptional speed, so it was a matter of moments before all of them came back.}

[Note—¹The 'Saptarishis' are seven holy sages said to be born from the mind of the creator Brahma. According to the Shatpath Brahman, they are the following: Atri, Bharadwaj, Maharishi Gautam, Jamdagni, Kashyap, Vashistha, and Viswamitra. They act as guide of the human race and guardians of Dharma through the changes of the four Yugas, viz. Sata Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga and Kali Yuga. This helps the supreme Lord to maintain balance in the society through the turmoil inherent in this gross, mortal world characterised by constant changes, and where both evil and good have to live side-by-side.

The names of the seven ancient sages vary in Hindu literature. While the names mentioned herein above are regarded as standard ones, there is another list of seven sages mentioned in the Mahabharat as follows: Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Vashistha. Each sage came from a different lineage, and their descendants carried forward their legacies, becoming renowned sages, teachers, enlightened guides and philosophers, moral preceptors, and upholders of the flag of Dharma in their own right, but each bearing the title of his ancestor sage as a distinguishing name.

According to the Brihadaranyka Upanishad, 2/2/4, the seven sages are: Kashyap, Atri, Vashistha, Vishwamitra, Gautam, Jamdagni, and Bharadwaj.

From astronomical point of view of ancient India dating back to the Vedic ages, the constellation of seven stars known as the 'Big Dipper' represent these Vedic sages. This constellation is also known as the 'Great Bear'.

According to the *Shiva Puran*, the Sapta Rishis and their corresponding Manvantars (eras) are the following—

Each Manvantara is ruled over by a Manu and there are fourteen Manvantaras in any kalpa. The Gods (Devas), the seven great sages (Saptarishis), and the Indra, change from one Manvantara to another.

The first Manu was Svayambhuva. The name of the chief God then was Yama, and the names of the seven sages were Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vashishtha.

The second Manu was Svarochisha. The name of the chief God then was Tushita, and the names of the seven sages were Agnidhra, Agnivaha, Medha, Medhatithi, Vasu, Jyotishvana and Dyutimana.

The third Manu was Uttam. The name of the chief God then was Rishabh, and the names of the seven sages were the Urjjas etc. [The individual names of the sages are not given.]

The fourth Manu was Tamas. The name of the chief God then was Satya, and the names of the seven sages were Gargya, Prithu, Agni, Janya, Dhata, Kapinka and Kapivana.

The fifth Manu was Raivat. The name of the chief God then was Raibhya, and the names of the seven sages were Vedavahu, Jaya, Muni, Vedashira, Hiranyaroma, Parjanya and Urddhavahu.

The sixth Manu was Chakshusha. There were five types of Gods in the sixth Manvantara, and their names were Adya, Prasuta, Ribhu, Prithugra and Lekha. The names of the seven sages were Bhrigu, Naha, Vivasvana, Sudharma, Viraja, Atinama, and Asashishnu.

The seventh Manvantara is the one that is underway now at present. The seventh Manu is Vaivasvat. The names of the seven sages are Atri, Vashishtha, Bhavya, Kashyapa, Gautam, Bharadvaja and Vishvamitra.

The remaining seven Manvantaras will come in the future. The eighth Manu will be Savarni.

The Shiva Puran gets extremely confused here and it is not possible to make out clearly who the Gods will be in the future Manvantaras. But the names of the seven sages of the eighth Manvantara are the following—Viravana, Avanivana, Sumantra, Dhritimana, Vasu, Varishnu and Arya.

The ninth Manu will be Rohit. The names of the seven sages will be Medhatithi, Vasu, Bhargava, Angira, Savana, Havya and Poulaha.

The tenth Manu will be Merusavarni. The name of the chief God then will be Dvishimanta, and the names of the seven sages will be Havishmana. Pulaha, Sukriti, Ayomukti, Vashishtha, Prayati and Nabhara.

The eleventh Manu will be Brahmasavarni. The names of the seven sages will be Havishmana, Kashyapa, Vapushmana, Varuna, Atreya, Anagha and Angira.

The twelfth Manu will be Dharmasavarni. The names of the sages will be Dyuti, Atreya, Angira, Tapasvai, Kashyapa, Taposhana and Taporati.

The thirteenth Manu will be Rouchya. The names of the seven sages will be Kashyapa, Magadha, Ativahya, Angirasa, Atreya, Vashishtha and Ajita.

The fourteenth and last Manu will be Bhoutya. The names of the seven sages are not mentioned.

What about the Gods of the seventh Manvantara, the era that is now current? The Gods now are forty-nine vayus, eleven rudras, two ashvinis, twelve adityas and eight vasus.]

19: राजा दशरथश्चैव दिव्यभास्वरमूर्तिमान्

विमानेन महार्हेण हंसयुक्तेन भास्वता

20: ततोऽन्तरिक्षं तत्सर्वं देवगन्धर्वसंकुलम्

शुशुभे तारकाचित्रं शरदीव नभस्तलम्

19: rājā daśarathaścaiva divyabhāsvaramūrtimān
vimānena mahārheṇa haṁsayuktena bhāsvatā

20: tato'ntarikṣaṁ tatsarvaṁ devagandharvasaṁkulam
śuśubhe tārakācitraṁ śaradīva nabhastalam

Verse no. 19: King Dashrath (father of Lord Ram) too arrived in a radiant and divine form, astride an extremely expensive celestial chariot that was splendorous, and was drawn by swans¹.

Verse no. 20: The entire sky was then crowded with all the gods and gandharvas. It was as beautiful as the autumn sky (i.e. the clear sky) that is studded with stars.

[Note--¹King Dashrath had died at the time of Lord Ram's forest exile. Since then he had lived in the heaven in a spirit form. He could not find deliverance as he felt guilty that he had been instrumental in sending his innocent son, Lord Ram, to the forest due to the perverseness and selfishness of one of his wives, Kaikeyi, who wanted to have her own son Bharat made the next king of Ayodhya. So now, since Lord Ram was poised to return home and ascend the throne of Ayodhya, this guilt of Dashrath was over. He therefore descended from heaven to bless Lord Ram, subtly ask for forgiveness, and thus freed from his guilt, he would then be able to find final deliverance for his soul. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 112.]

21: तत उत्थाय वैदेहि तेषां मध्ये यशस्विनी
 उवाच वाक्यं कल्याणी रामं पृथुलवक्षसम्
 22: राजपुत्र न ते कोपं करोमि विदिता हि मे
 गतिः स्त्रीणां नराणां च शृणु चेदं वचो मम
 23: अन्तश्चरति भूतानां मातरिश्वा सदागतिः
 स मे विमुञ्चतु प्राणान्यदि पापं चराम्यहम्
 24: अग्निरापस्तथाकाशं पृथिवी वायुरेव च
 विमुञ्चन्तु मम प्राणान्यदि पापं चराम्यहम्

21: tata utthāya vaidehi teṣāṃ madhye yaśasvinī
 uvāca vākyaṃ kalyāṇī rāmaṃ pr̥thulavakṣasam

22: rājaputra na te kopam karomi veditā hi me
 gatiḥ strīṇāṃ narāṇāṃ ca śṛṇu cedam vaco mama

23: antaścarati bhūtānāṃ mātariśvā sadāgatiḥ
 sa me vimuñcatu prāṇānyadi pāpaṃ carāmyaham

24: agnirāpastathākāśaṃ pr̥thivī vāyureva ca
 vimuñcantu mama prāṇānyadi pāpaṃ carāmyaham

Verse no. 21: The auspicious and most honourable Vaidehi (Sita) arose in their midst. She spoke to Lord Ram, who had a broad chest (pr̥thulavakṣasam), poignantly, yet confidently. {Sita was confident as she was sure that no harm would ever come to her because she knew that she was pure, untainted and immaculate by all counts. While she spoke, there was no trace of bitterness in her tone, but it surely displayed the sadness of her heart. Her was polite and respectful towards Lord Ram.}

Sita said:--

Verse no. 22: "Oh honourable prince (rājaputra)! I do not blame you, because I know the ways of women and of men. But please lend your ears and patiently listen to these words of mine.

Verse no. 23: The air that is inside all living beings is always in motion. If I have committed an evil act, let it move out of my body and free me. {Let the life-sustaining wind, that represents the holy wind-god, move out from my mortal body if it finds this body sinful and unfit for it to reside in. It is the wind that constantly moves in and out of a living being's body in the form of 'breath' that keeps the body alive. So let the holy wind-god punish me by ordering his representative, the breath, to leave my body and not entering it again. What better punishment can there be for a sinful person than to die.}

Verse no. 24: Verily indeed, if I have committed an evil act, let fire, water, space, earth and air free my breath of life.

{To wit, if I am corrupted, if I hadn't maintained my chastity, purity, dignity, honour and self-respect, if I had in any way committed adultery, either mentally or

physically, by thought or sight, if I paid even a slightest bit of attention to anyone except my beloved husband Lord Ram, then let me die this very moment. I beg all of you illustrious gods of life in this world who represent the five elements of existence, i.e. sky, air, fire, water and earth, to punish me for any infidelity and impropriety that I may be found guilty of.}"

25: ततोऽन्तरिक्षे वागासीत्सर्वा विश्रावयन्दिशः
पुण्या संहर्षणी तेषां वानराणां महात्मनाम्

26: वायुरुवाच

26: भो भो राघव सत्यं वै वायुरस्मि सदागतिः
अपापा मैथिली राजन्संगच्छ सह भार्यया

25: tato'ntarikṣe vāgāsītsarvā viśrāvayandīśaḥ
puṇyā saṁharṣaṇī teṣāṁ vānarāṇām mahātmanām

26: vāyuruvāca

26: bho bho rāghava satyaṁ vai vāyurasmi sadāgatiḥ
apāpā maithilī rājansaṁgaccha saha bhāryayā

Verse no. 25: Then a sacred voice spoke from the firmament. It echoed in all the directions and gladdened the heart of all the monkeys (and bears) of Lord Ram's army.

Verse no. 26: Vayu (the wind-god) said: "Oh Raghava! This is the truth. I am the wind that is always in motion. Oh king! Maithili (Sita, the daughter of the king of Mithila) is without any kind of taint. So therefore, please accept her as your wife; let you two be united once again.

{Oh Lord Ram, I stand witness to your re-union and vouch for Sita's purity and auspiciousness. There is nothing secret or hidden with me as I move in all the directions and am fully aware of all the things happening anywhere. The most secret of things are known to me, as I enter and leave the bodies of all living beings, and hence I am acquainted with their inner thoughts and emotions. I vouch for Sita that she has never thought of anyone except you.}"

27: अग्निरुवाच

27: अहमन्तःशरीरस्थो भूतानां रघुनन्दन
सुसूक्ष्ममपि काकुत्स्थ मैथिली नापराध्यति

27: agniruvāca

27: ahamantaḥśarīrastho bhūtānāṁ raghunandana
susūkṣmamapi kākutstha maithilī nāparādhyati

Verse no. 27: Then, Agni (the fire-god) said to Lord Ram: "Oh descendant of the Raghu lineage! I reside in the bodies of all living beings. Oh Kakutstha! Maithili (Sita) has not committed even a slightest fraction of any kind of crime; she hasn't committed any offence. I vouch for her that she is as pure as the fire. {To wit, the fire is a holy and purifying entity. It burns any impurity put in it. The simplest way to understand this is the way gold is purified by the goldsmith. When an impure sample of gold is put into the fire by him, all impurities are burnt and what remains is pure metal.} ¹"

[Note--¹This fact, that Sita was pure, was proved when, according to other versions of the Ramayana story, she was asked by Lord Ram to prove her purity by stepping into a burning pile of wood from which flames leapt up. Sita did as asked, without any fear, and emerged unharmed in front of all those who were present on the occasion. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108--to Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 109.]

28: वरुण उवाच

28: रसा वै मत्प्रसूता हि भूतदेहेषु राघव
अहं वै त्वां प्रब्रवीमि मैथिली प्रतिगृह्यताम्

28: varuṇa uvāca

28: rasā vai matprasūtā hi bhūtadeheṣu rāghava
aham vai tvām prabravāmi maithilī pratigrhyatām

Verse no. 28: Varuna (the god of water) said to Lord Ram: "Oh Raghava! The life sustaining fluids in the bodies of all living beings owe their existence to me. I am asking you to accept Maithili back without any reservations (for she is untainted and pure)."

[Note--The water element, like the fire and the wind elements, is a vital component in the body of all persons. The blood, which forms the lifeline of all human beings, primarily consists of water. Without water, the body would dry up, and life cease to exist. Even in the outside, physical world, water forms an essential ingredient that sustains life on earth, for without water the earth would be an hot and arid wasteland.]

29: ब्रह्मोवाच

29: पुत्र नैतदिहाश्चर्यं त्वयि राजर्षिधर्मिणि
साधो सद्वृत्तमार्गस्थे शृणु चेदं वचो मम
30: शत्रुरेष त्वया वीर देवगन्धर्वभोगिनाम्
यक्षाणां दानवानां च महर्षीणां च पातितः
31: अवध्यः सर्वभूतानां मत्प्रसादात्पुराभवत्
कस्माच्चित्कारणात्पापः कंचित्कालमुपेक्षितः

32: वधार्थमात्मनस्तेन हृता सीता दुरात्मना
 नलकूबरशापेन रक्षा चास्याः कृता मया
 33: यदि ह्यकामामासेवेत्स्त्रियमन्यामपि ध्रुवम्
 शतधास्य फलेद्देह इत्युक्तः सोऽभवत्पुरा
 34: नात्र शङ्का त्वया कार्या प्रतीच्छेमां महाद्युते
 कृतं त्वया महत्कार्यं देवानाममरप्रभ

29: brahmovāca

29: putra naitadihāścaryam tvayi rājarṣidharmini
 sādho sadvṛttamārgasthe śṛṇu cedam vaco mama

30: śatrureṣa tvayā vīra devagandharvabhoginām
 yakṣāṇām dānavānām ca maharṣiṇām ca pātitaḥ

31: avadhyāḥ sarvabhūtānām matprasādātpurābhavat
 kasmāccitkāraṇātpāpaḥ kaṃcitkālāmupekṣitaḥ

32: vadhārthamātmanastena hṛtā sītā durātmanā
 nalakūbaraśāpena rakṣā cāsyāḥ kṛtā mayā

33: yadi hyakāmāmāsevetstriyamanyāmapi dhruvam
 śatadhāsyā phaleddeha ityuktaḥ so'bhavatpurā

34: nātra śaṅkā tvayā kāryā pratīcchemām mahādyute
 kṛtam tvayā mahatkāryam devānāmamaraprabha

Verse no. 29: Brahma, the grandfather of creation, said to Lord Ram: "Oh son! This action on your part is not surprising. You are acquainted with the Dharma (i.e. lawful conduct; rules governing righteousness, auspiciousness, propriety and probity) of great sages and noble kings. You are virtuous and you follow the path of good conduct yourself. Please listen to these words of mine.

Verse no. 30: Oh brave one (vīra)! You have brought down the enemy of the gods, the gandharvas, the serpents, the yakshas, the danavas and the maharshis (great sages and saints). {Brahma is referring to the demons led by Ravana whom Lord Ram eliminated during the War of Lanka.}

Verse no. 31: Ravana had obtained favours from me by way of boons, which made him invincible, arrogant and haughty. This is the reason, I ignored that evil fellow and his misdeeds for some length of time. {Since he had done severe penance and observed austerities, I was pleased with him and granted him certain boons that he desired. In order to uphold the sanctity of my words, I ignored his mischief for some time. But in the process, my tolerance and magnanimity was treated as my weakness by that stupid fellow who went out of hand, getting from bad to worse to worst, in the belief that he has got unbridled powers that were granted by none else but the

Creator himself, and so therefore no one can supercede, subdue or overpower him, and he has unbridled sovereignty and authority to do whatever he wants to do in this creation, including the heaven. He had gone on the rampage in the world, tormenting everyone, leaving this creation terrified and in turmoil. He did not even spare the gods, nor great sages.}

Verse no. 32: It was for the sake of his own end (death) that the evil-minded wicked fellow had the courage to abduct Sita. But I protected her indirectly through Nala-kuber's curse.

Verse no. 33: Ravana had earlier been cursed by Nala-kuber him that if he forced himself on any woman against her wishes, his head was certain to shatter into a hundred fragments as a consequence.

Verse no. 34: Oh immensely radiant Lord (mahādyute)! You should not have any doubt on this. You are an immortal being, someone of a very high stature that is possessed exclusively by gods and other immortals, and you have performed a great deed (by eliminating the scourge in the form of the ruthless demons, along with their violent and evil king Ravana, that had plagued this creation). {Oh Lord Ram! What has been done by you is indeed a great work for the gods and the immortals.}"

35: दशरथ उवाच

35: प्रीतोऽस्मि वत्स भद्रं ते पिता दशरथोऽस्मि ते
अनुजानामि राज्यं च प्रशाधि पुरुषोत्तम

35: daśaratha uvāca

35: prīto'smi vatsa bhadraṁ te pitā daśaratho'smi te
anujānāmi rājyaṁ ca praśādhi puruṣottama

Verse no. 35: Dasharath (Lord Ram's father who was now in a spirit form because he had died soon after Lord Ram had gone to the forest fourteen years ago) said: "Oh son! Oh the fortunate and righteous one! I am pleased with you and have full confidence in you. I am your father Dasharath. Oh son, you are supreme in the human race! I grant you permission to rule the kingdom."

[Note--When Lord Ram left for fourteen years of forest exile along with Sita and his brother Laxman, his father, king Dasharath, was so dismayed and heartbroken that he died soon thereafter. He had a sincere desire to anoint Lord Ram, his eldest son, as the next king of the kingdom of Ayodhya, but his wish could not be fulfilled due to palace intrigue when Kaikeyi, his wife whom he doted too much, had betrayed him by insisting, against all norms of succession, to make her son Bharat as the king. As a consequence, Dasharath did not find rest for his soul, but went to live in a 'spirit' form in the heaven. Now his 'spirit' came to the battle-field of Lanka to bless his son Lord Ram, and instruct the latter to accept the crown without any hesitation as it was his father's unfulfilled wish, and by doing so the Lord would free his soul from the

burden of regret and the guilt of wrong-doing, which would enable the king to attain deliverance, emancipation and eternal rest.]

36: राम उवाच

36: अभिवादये त्वां राजेन्द्र यदि त्वं जनको मम
गमिष्यामि पुरीं रम्यामयोध्यां शासनात्तव

36: rāma uvāca

36: abhivādaye tvāṃ rājendra yadi tvam janako mama
gamiṣyāmi purīm ramyāmayodhyāṃ śāsanāttava

Verse no. 36: Lord Ram replied: "Respected father, who is like Indra (the king of gods) amongst kings on this earth, I bow before you. If you are indeed my father¹, then there is no doubt that I will obey your instructions. I will go back to the lovely city of Ayodhya to accept the crown."

[Note--¹This caveat, 'if you are my father', by Lord Ram is intended to keep all options open. The Lord, under the present circumstances, was not sure what conditions prevailed in Ayodhya, whether he would be welcomed after such a long gap, whether the political situation was in his favour, whether some other trick or intrigue or conspiracy had been hatched by Kaikeyi to ensure he is barred from the throne and her son Bharat gets the crown instead, which was the very basis of all the developments that had forced Lord Ram to go to exile in the first place, and whether his brother Bharat has still remained faithful and loyal to him, or he has changed his mind and devised some kind of crooked plan to grab the throne after imprisoning the Lord as soon as he returned home.

This is the reason why Lord Ram had sent his trusted messenger Hanuman to go and meet Bharat ahead of his arrival aboard the Pushpak plane, and find out the ground reality in Ayodhya, to see if he would be welcomed, and to judge the attitude of Bharat. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 121.]

37: मार्कण्डेय उवाच

37: तमुवाच पिता भूयः प्रहृष्टो मनुजाधिप
गच्छायोध्यां प्रशाधि त्वं राम रक्तान्तलोचन
38: ततो देवान्नमस्कृत्य सुहृद्भिरभिनन्दितः
महेन्द्र इव पौलोम्या भार्यया स समेयिवान्
39: ततो वरं ददौ तस्मै अविन्ध्याय परंतपः
त्रिजटां चार्थमानाभ्यां योजयामास राक्षसीम्

37: mārkaṇḍeya uvāca

37: tamuvāca pitā bhūyaḥ prahr̥ṣṭo manuḥādhipa
gacchāyodhyāṃ praśādhi tvam̐ rāma raktāntalocana

38: tato devānnamaskṛtya suhr̥dbhirabhinanditaḥ
mahendra iva paulomyā bhāryayā sa sameyivān

39: tato varam̐ dadau tasmai avindhyāya param̐tapah
trijaṭāṃ cārthamānābhyaṃ yojayāmāsa rākṣasīm

Verse no. 37: Sage Markandeya (the narrator of this version of the Ramayana) addressed Yudhisthira, who was listening to the sage in rapt attention, and said: 'Oh great king (literally 'lord of men'—"manuḥādhipa")! On hearing these words, his father was delighted and said, "Oh Ram! Oh the one with eyes like a reddish lotus flower (raktāntalocana)! Go and rule Ayodhya (for this is my desire and instruction to you)."

Verse no. 38: Lord Ram bowed to the gods and was praised by his well-wishers. He was then reunited with his wife Sita, just like the great Indra, the king of gods, had been united with Poulomi.

Verse no. 39: Lord Ram, who was a vanquisher of enemies, then granted a boon to Avindhya (the demon who had protected Sita during her captivity, dissuaded Ravana from harming her, and had supported her morally and encouraged her to have patience by asserting that her deliverance would come soon). The Lord also honoured Trijata, the demoness who had always stood by Sita and served her in captivity, and gave a lot of gifts to her.

40: तमुवाच ततो ब्रह्मा देवैः शक्रमुखैर्वृतः
कौसल्यामातरिष्ठांस्ते वरानद्य ददानि कान्
41: वव्रे रामः स्थितिं धर्मे शत्रुभिश्चापराजयम्
राक्षसैर्निहतानां च वानराणां समुद्भवम्
42: ततस्ते ब्रह्मणा प्रोक्ते तथेति वचने तदा
समुत्तस्थुर्महाराज वानरा लब्धचेतसः

40: tamuvāca tato brahmā devaiḥ śakramukhairvṛtaḥ
kausalyāmātariṣṭhāṃste varānadya dadāni kām̐

41: vavre rāmaḥ sthitiṃ dharme śatrubhiścāparājayam
rākṣasairnihatānāṃ ca vānarāṇāṃ samudbhavam

42: tataste brahmaṇā prokte tatheti vacane tadā
samuttasthurmahārāja vānarā labdhacetasaḥ

Verse no. 40: Brahma and all the gods, with Indra at the forefront, then said to Lord Ram: "Oh son of Kaushalya (Lord Ram's mother)! What boons and blessings do you wish to have which we shall be glad to grant you today?"

Verse no. 41: Lord Ram, who was devoted to the tenets of Dharma¹, chose it as one of the boons. Besides it, he also sought victory over enemies, and revival of the monkeys who had been killed by the demons in the battle-field.

Verse no. 42: Sage Markandeya continued: "Oh great king (mahārāja; i.e. Yudhisthira)! When Brahma pronounced 'so be it', whereby granting the desired boons to Lord Ram, all the monkeys (and bears who lay wounded and unconscious in the battle-field) regained their senses and arose cheerfully².

[Note--¹Dharma—The word 'Dharma' has a wide application. It refers to all the virtues that come under the broad definition of probity, propriety, righteousness, auspiciousness, ethics, morality, modesty, and proper / noble conduct and thought. Dharma also involves the virtues of compassion, empathy, mercy and selflessness. Dharma also includes religious merit or a meritorious deed based on the above principles.

Lord Ram wished that he should always steadfastly stand to uphold the tenets of Dharma, and should never deviate or go astray from it.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 114.]

43: सीता चापि महाभागा वरं हनुमते ददौ

रामकीर्त्या समं पुत्र जीवितं ते भविष्यति

44: दिव्यास्त्वामुपभोगाश्च मत्प्रसादकृताः सदा

उपस्थास्यन्ति हनुमन्निति स्म हरिलोचन

45: ततस्ते प्रेक्षमाणानां तेषामक्लिष्टकर्मणाम्

अन्तर्धानं ययुर्देवाः सर्वे शक्रपुरोगमाः

43: sītā cāpi mahābhāgā varam hanumate dadau

rāmakīrtiā samam putra jīvitam te bhaviṣyati

44: divyāstvāmupabhogāśca matprasādakṛtāḥ sadā

upasthāsyanti hanumanniti sma harilocana

45: tataste prekṣamāṇānām teṣāmakliṣṭakarmaṇām

antardhānam yayurdevāḥ sarve śakrapurogamāḥ

Verse no. 43: Then Sita, the blessed and honourable one, granted a boon to Hanuman, saying: "Oh son! You will live for as long as Lord Ram's fame lasts.

Verse no. 44: Oh Hanuman! Oh the one with bright, shining eyes! Through my favours, you will always have access to the best of nectar-like delicacies. {This is why

even today, sweets in the shape of small balls, called 'laddus', are offered to Lord Hanuman in temples and homes by his devotees. What Sita meant was that Hanuman would enjoy in this world all the comforts and pleasures that the gods have access to in the heaven.}"

Verse no. 45: Then, while all those who were present on the ground watched, all the gods, along with Indra (Shakra), their king, who had come to bless Lord Ram and thank him for eliminating the cruel demons, vanished from sight (i.e. they went back to their respective abodes in the heaven).

46: दृष्ट्वा तु रामं जानक्या समेतं शक्रसारथिः

उवाच परमप्रीतः सुहृन्मध्य इदं वचः

47: देवगन्धर्वयक्षाणां मानुषासुरभोगिनाम्

अपनीतं त्वया दुःखमिदं सत्यपराक्रम

48: सदेवासुरगन्धर्वा यक्षराक्षसपन्नगाः

कथयिष्यन्ति लोकास्त्वां यावद्भूमिर्धरिष्यति

49: इत्येवमुक्त्वानुज्ञाप्य रामं शस्त्रभृतां वरम्

संपूज्यापाक्रमत्तेन रथेनादित्यवर्चसा

46: dr̥ṣṭvā tu rāmaṃ jānakyā sametaṃ śakrasārathiḥ
uvāca paramapritāḥ suhr̥ṇmadhya idaṃ vacaḥ

47: devagandharvayakṣāṇāṃ mānuṣāsuraabhoginām
apanītaṃ tvayā duḥkhamidaṃ satyaparākrama

48: sadevāsuraagandharvā yakṣarākṣasapannagāḥ
kathayiṣyanti lokāstvām yāvadbhūmirdharīṣyati

49: ityevamuktvanujñāpya rāmaṃ śastrabhṛtām varam
saṃpūjyāpākramattena rathenādityavarcasā

Verse no. 46: On seeing Rama united with Janaki, Indra's charioteer (named Matali) was extremely delighted. He spoke to Lord Ram as all the latter's well-wishers watched.

Verse no. 47: "Oh mighty warrior for whom truth is valour! You have removed the misery of the gods, the gandharvas, the yakshas, men, asuras and serpents.¹

Verse no. 48: Therefore, the entire world, with the gods, the asuras, the gandharvas, the yakshas, the rakshasas (demons) and the serpents will speak of your deeds as long as this earth exists. Your glory and fame will become eternal and last for as long as this existence exists. Oh Lord--the gods, demons, and all creatures will recount your story as long as the earth stands."

Verse no. 49: Speaking these words to Rama, supreme among all wielders of weapons, he took his leave and having honoured him, departed in the chariot that was as resplendent as the sun¹.

[Note--¹Briefly, the gandharvas are a kind of celestial beings who attend the court of Indra, the king of gods. They are demi-gods who are deemed to be experts in the art of creating illusion of grandeur and pomp, and are responsible for decoration and using musical instruments in heaven. Usually they are benign by nature.

The asuras have a negative character and their conduct is opposite to that of the gods. The demons are also oftentimes called 'asuras' for the same reason. Usually, the asuras are very powerful beings, and though the gods and the asuras are like cousins, yet there has been an eternal conflict between the two, with the gods representing all the virtues that come under the definition of Dharma, while the asuras follow a path that is just the opposite.

The rakshasas are usually categorised as demons in ordinary parlance. Ravana was a 'rakshasa'. They are usually cruel, flesh eaters, violent and reckless. They are worse than the asuras--i.e. in the scale measuring the level of goodness and morality in a creature, the rakshasa rank below the asuras. The asuras predate the demons, as the asuras had participated in the legendary event associated with the 'churning of the ocean' in search of Amrit (ambrosia or nectar of eternity) in some ancient time. In this event, the asuras and the gods were on the opposite side of the churning rod, and pulled the churning rope in opposite directions--implying the diametrically opposite character of the gods and the asuras. The demons came in later on when some of the asuras took birth with a physical body on earth.

The yakshas are also a kind of spirits that live in forests, mountains and trees. They are worshipped by people as they are regarded as benevolent towards those who worship them and pay regular homage to them. Yakshas normally do not harm anybody.

The serpents represent subterranean living beings. According to the Puranic lore, the celestial serpent known as the Seshnath floats on the surface of the celestial ocean, known as 'Kshir-sagar', and Lord Vishnu, the protector and care-taker of this creation, reclines on the body of Seshnath's coiled body. Further, this celestial serpent also supports the earth on its hood and prevents it from sinking into the depths of the celestial ocean.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 110.]

50: ततः सीतां पुरस्कृत्य रामः सौमित्रिणा सह
सुग्रीवप्रमुखैश्चैव सहितः सर्ववानरैः

50: tataḥ sītāṃ puraskṛtya rāmaḥ saumitriṇā saha
sugrīvapramukhaiścaiva sahitaḥ sarvavānaraiḥ

Verse no. 50: Then Lord Ram (before his departure for Ayodhya) decided to make proper arrangements for the protection of Lanka. Hence, Lord Ram gathered all his companions and friends together, such as the monkey and bear warriors, and their

chieftains such as Sugriv etc., along with Sita and his brother Laxman to stand witness to this arrangement.

[Note--With its powerful king Ravana dead along with the majority of his demon warriors, and the city of Lanka already in ruins, Lord Ram thought it wise to make proper arrangements for its protection and preservation of whatever was left in the city before he left for Ayodhya. The Lord had anointed Vibhishan as its king, and certainly he would not wish to see the latter having to face invaders and plunderers coming in droves to rampage through the city and loot whatever remained of it. Lord Ram did not want history to blame him for being selfish in the sense that once he got back his wife and appointed his protégée Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka, he cared nothing for its future and left it to face its own fate, which would be tantamount to abandoning it. If he had left for Ayodhya without making proper arrangements for the security and protection of Lanka, then it was highly likely that invaders and marauders would come in and plunder whatever survived the war. Vibhishan was now Lord Ram's friend, and it would be highly improper to leave the latter defenceless, unprotected, and in the lurch.

What probably the Lord might have done was to appoint friendly demon warriors, who were wise, intelligent, experienced, and in favour of Vibhishan, to key positions in the city and delegate necessary powers to them.]

- 51: विधाय रक्षां लङ्कायां विभीषणपुरस्कृतः
संततार पुनस्तेन सेतुना मकरालयम्
52: पुष्पकेण विमानेन खेचरेण विराजता
कामगेन यथा मुख्यैरमात्यैः संवृतो वशी
53: ततस्तीरे समुद्रस्य यत्र शिश्ये स पार्थिवः
तत्रैवोवास धर्मात्मा सहितः सर्ववानरैः
54: अथैनान्नाघवः काले समानीयाभिपूज्य च
विसर्जयामास तदा रत्नैः संतोष्य सर्वशः
55: गतेषु वानरेन्द्रेषु गोपुच्छर्क्षेषु तेषु च
सुग्रीवसहितो रामः किष्किन्धां पुनरागमत्

51: vidhāya rakṣāṃ laṅkāyāṃ vibhīṣaṇapuraskṛtaḥ
saṃtatāra punastena setunā makarālayam

52: puṣṭpakeṇa vimānena khecareṇa virājatā
kāmagena yathā mukhyairamātyaiḥ saṃvṛto vaśī

53: tatastīre samudrasya yatra śīśye sa pārthivaḥ
tatraivovāsa dharmātmā sahitaḥ sarvavānaraḥ

54: athainānrāghavaḥ kāle samānīyābhipūjya ca
visarjayāmāsa tadā ratnair saṃtoṣya sarvaśaḥ

55: gateṣu vānarendreṣu gopuccharkṣeṣu teṣu ca
sugrīvasahito rāmaḥ kiṣkindhām punarāgamat

Verse no. 51: After making proper arrangements for the protection and security of Lanka (as narrated in the previous verse no. 50), Lord Ram and his party departed from there. With the Lord's friend Vibhishan leading the way, they arrived on the shore of the ocean which was full of sharks and other big fish, and reached the spot where the Lord had landed earlier after crossing the bridge (he had got constructed to facilitate the crossing of his army from the mainland to the island of Lanka).

Verse no. 52: Surrounded by all his chief advisers and friends who followed him, the Lord then got into the Pushpak vimana (plane) which could travel through the sky and could go wherever it willed.

Verse no. 53: With all the monkeys, Lord Ram, who was a follower of Dharma, stayed for a while on the shore of the ocean at the spot where he had slept earlier (while the bridge was being constructed)¹.

Verse no. 54: When the time was right, Lord Ram (Raghava) assembled all the monkeys and bears and honoured them. He satisfied them with abundant gifts of gems, and then gave them leave to depart (and go back to their respective homes)².

Verse no. 55: When the commanders of the countless groups of monkeys with long tails like those of cows, as well as bears had left, Lord Ram returned to Kishkindha with Sugriv on board the Pushpak plane¹.

[Note--¹Lord Ram's army was amazingly huge and diverse. There were monkeys and bears with a wide variety of appearances and belonged to different denominations as they came from different parts of the earth. The army had countless such warriors that reflected the diversity and spread of this race to every corner of the realm. All of them had come on the call of Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, the primary home of the monkeys and bears. In modern parlance, we can call such monkeys and bears as expatriates who had spread out from their ancestral homes in Kishkindha to live in other parts of the earth for a variety of reasons. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 21 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it; (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 34 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that follow it.}

Now, they crossed back to the mainland on the same bridge by which they had arrived in Lanka earlier. Lord Ram, with Sita, Laxman, Vibhishan, Sugriv, Angad and Jamvant, however, crossed the ocean aboard the Pushpak plane.

When everyone had crossed over, the Lord and his party rested for some time at the same place where they had pitched camp earlier, prior the leaving for Lanka.

²Lord Ram had requested Vibhishan to collect a large numbers of gifts on board the Pushpak plane at the time of departure from Lanka. After the party landed on the shore of the mainland, the Lord distributed these gifts to all his warriors. Everyone got something. The gifts included gems and clothes which were the traditional gifts given in those ancient times.

Then the time came to say goodbye to everyone. This is because it wasn't practical for the Lord to carry such a huge army to Ayodhya. On his request, the monkey and bear soldiers as well as their chiefs left with a heavy heart as everyone

was so impressed by Lord Ram's caring, magnanimous and affectionate nature that they would have preferred to stay with him all their lives if it was at all possible. But obviously this was not feasible. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 118-a along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it.}

³Ram Charit Manas mentions that the Lord had allowed senior members of Kishkindha to join him aboard the Pushpak palance. They were Sugriv, Neel, Jamvant (the chief of the bears), Angad (the crown prince of the kingdom), Nala and Hanuman. Of course, Vibhishan (the new king of Lanka) too joined them. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 118-b.}]

56: विभीषणेनानुगतः सुग्रीवसहितस्तदा

पुष्पकेण विमानेन वैदेहया दर्शयन्वनम्

57: किष्किन्धां तु समासाद्य रामः प्रहरतां वरः

अङ्गदं कृतकर्माणं यौवराज्येऽभ्यषेचयत्

56: vibhīṣaṇenānugataḥ sugrīvasahitastadā
puṣpakeṇa vimānena vaidehyā darśayanvanam

57: kiṣkindhām tu samāsādya rāmaḥ praharatām varah
aṅgadaṁ kṛtakarmāṇaṁ yauvarājye'bhyaṣecayat

Verse no. 56: With Vibhishan and Sugriv accompanying him aboard the Pushpak plane, the Lord retraced his steps as he flew over the same path by which he had walked from the spot where he, Sita and Laxman had lived, and from where Sita was abducted by Ravana. From the sky, the Lord showed Sita the forest below and the arduous journey he had to undertake through the wilderness in order to find her and finally free her¹. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 119 along with Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede it.}

Verse no. 57: Having arrived at Kishkindha, Lord Ram who was a foremost warrior, anointed Angad as the kingdom's heir apparent and its next king (after Sugriv). Lord Ram was very pleased with Angad and the service the latter had rendered to the Lord, faithfully and diligently, and so he wanted to reward Angad².

[Note--¹On his way back, Lord Ram pointed out to Sita all the landmarks on the ground below through which the Lord had passed earlier in quest of her freedom.

²Lord Ram's decision had practical considerations. He had reservations about the future safety and security of Angad. This is because the Lord feared that Sugriv, Angad's uncle, will, in all probability, become jealous of Angad, and by some ruse he would either sideline him or get rid of him outright once things returned to routine and Lord Ram starts living in a far-away land of Ayodhya. In that scenario, where would poor Angad go? His father Vaali had died at the hands of Lord Ram, and the Lord deeply regretted for it. It was now incumbent upon Lord Ram to ensure safety and security of Angad's future. Like he had made Vibhishan as the king of Lanka, he deemed it as his responsibility to anoint Angad as the next ruler of Kishkindha.

There was another factor playing in Lord Ram's mind. From his experience of Sugriv, the Lord realised that the latter was very selfish and easily falls prey to indulgence in pleasures of kingdom. On a previous occasion, the Lord had himself threatened Sugriv that he would kill him if he forgets his promise of helping the Lord to trace Sita's whereabouts. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 18 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.}

So, what was the guarantee that Sugriv would not eliminate Angad as he would see his nephew (Angad) as a hindrance to his unbridled authority.

The Lord could see sadness, distress and pain in Angad's eyes. Angad, by his silence and tear-filled eyes seemed to tell Lord Ram that the Lord was his only protector and saviour, and he did not want to live a servant's life under his uncle Sugriv. The Lord read Angad's feelings that were reflected in his eyes and his sad demeanours, and decided to anoint him as the crown prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha to abort any chance of ill-treatment of Angad by Sugriv.]

58: ततस्तैरेव सहितो रामः सौमित्रिणा सह

यथागतेन मार्गेण प्रययौ स्वपुरं प्रति

59: अयोध्यां स समासाद्य पुरीं राष्ट्रपतिस्ततः

भरताय हनूमन्तं दूतं प्रस्थापयत्तदा

58: tatastaireva sahito rāmaḥ saumitriṇā saha
yathāgatena mārgēṇa prayayau svapuram prati

59: ayodhyāṁ sa samāsādya puriṁ rāṣṭrapatistataḥ
bharatāya hanūmantaṁ dūtaṁ prasthāpayattadā

Verse no. 58: Together with all his companions, and accompanied by Laxman (and, of course, Sita), Lord Ram finally arrived in his own city of Ayodhya (svapuram). He had travelled back following the same route he had taken while going to the forest, albeit this time it was aboard the Pushpak plane.

Verse no. 59: Having reached Ayodhya, the Lord of the kingdom (rāṣṭrapati) sent Hanuman as a messenger to meet Bharat, convey to him about the Lord's well-being, and bring back news of whatever he observes.

[Note--Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 120--to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121.]

60: लक्षयित्वेङ्गितं सर्वं प्रियं तस्मै निवेद्य च

वायुपुत्रे पुनः प्राप्ते नन्दिग्राममुपागमत्

61: स तत्र मलदिग्धाङ्गं भरतं चीरवाससम्

अग्रतः पादुके कृत्वा ददर्शासीनमासने

62: समेत्य भरतेनाथ शत्रुघ्नेन च वीर्यवान्

राघवः सहसौमित्रिर्मुमुदे भरतर्षभ

63: तथा भरतशत्रुघ्नौ समेतौ गुरुणा तदा

वैदेह्या दर्शनेनोभौ प्रहर्ष समवापतुः

60: lakṣayitveṅgitaṃ sarvaṃ priyaṃ tasmai nivedya ca
vāyuput্রে punaḥ prāpte nandigrāmamupāgamat

61: sa tatra maladigdhāṅgaṃ bharataṃ cīravāśasam
agrataḥ pāduke kṛtvā dadarśāsīnamāsane

62: sametya bharatenātha śatrughnena ca vīryavān
rāghavaḥ sahasaumitirmumude bharatarṣabha

63: tathā bharataśatrughnau sametau guruṇā tadā
vaidehyā darśanenobhau praharṣaṃ samavāpatuḥ

Verse no. 60: Hanuman carefully observed the situation in Ayodhya and deduced that the things were favourable for Lord Ram to return home. He came back to inform the Lord of what he had observed. He briefed the Lord that he had brought pleasant news for him because there is no doubt that he would be heartily welcomed home by one and all in the city. Bharat is still loyal and devoted to him, and he was eagerly awaiting the Lord's return.

Lord Ram was mightily pleased when he heard this auspicious news. He boarded the plane again, along with all his companions, and came to Nandigram on the outskirts of Ayodhya city where Bharat had been living as a reclusive hermit all through the time when the Lord was absent¹.

Verse no. 61: Lord Ram saw Bharat there--his limbs were covered with dirt, he was attired in garments made of bark (like hermits wear), and was seated on his seat with Lord Ram's sandals placed before him on a throne².

Verse no. 62: Sage Markandeya continued with his narration of the story of the Ramayana for the benefit of Yudhisthira who was listening to him in rapt attention: "Oh noble gentleman who is like a bull amongst the descendants of Bharata lineage (an honourable address for Yudhisthira)! When Lord Ram was reunited with his two younger brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, he was overjoyed, and so was Laxman. All the four brothers rejoiced at this fortunate turn of events that marked the end of their long suffering of separation for fourteen long years³.

Verse no. 63: When Bharat and Shatrughan were reunited with their elder brother Lord Ram, and saw Sita with him in a cheerful mood, both the brothers were very delighted. {It was reciprocal: Lord Ram and Laxman were delighted to meet Bharat and Shatrughan, and the latter were delighted to meet the former.}

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Sortha no. 2-b; Doha no. 4 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Lord Ram sent Hanuman to see the situation prevailing in the city of Ayodhya at that point of time. Fourteen long years had passed by, and the Lord wanted to ascertain if the people still loved him, if Bharat had not been prevailed upon by selfish ministers or courtiers, under some conspiracy hatched by his mother Kaikeyi who had always wanted him to be the next king, to ascend the throne in the absence of Lord Ram, and once Bharat sat on the throne and began to enjoy royal privileges, would he like to step down upon Lord Ram's return. Besides this, the Lord wanted to ascertain if the population had forgotten him, and whether they would like him to take the throne after having been absent for such a long time. Do the subjects of the kingdom still have the same warmth of feeling for the Lord which they had in the beginning of his forest exile.

Then the Lord had also wondered if some powerful enemy had not exploited the turmoil in Ayodhya to invade the capital city and grab the crown.

These and other uncertainties compelled the Lord to test the ground before arriving in Ayodhya. So he first send his trusted lieutenant Hanuman to feel the pulse and bring back the news. The Lord thought to himself that if Hanuman brings back a negative report, then he would stay for the rest of his life somewhere in the forest, far away from Ayodhya. The Lord had countless friends spread over the land, ordinary country folks, sages and hermits, as well as his friends in Kishkindha, and he would be welcomed anywhere he decided to settle down for the future. Lord Ram had no desire to have a confrontation with anyone in Ayodhya who may be hostile to him.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 323--to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326.

Bharat was given this footwear by Lord Ram in Chitrakoot where Bharat and a large party from Ayodhya had gone to ask for forgiveness for the misdeeds of Kaikeyi and persuade the Lord to return home. The Lord told them it would be wrong to break the words of his father, king Dashratha, that he should live in the forest for fourteen years, specially when the king was dead now. At that time the Lord had given Bharat his sandals to symbolically represent the Lord himself, and which Bharat had respectfully put on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya to signal that the real ruler is Lord Ram and no one else.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 3--to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6.]

64: तस्मै तद्भरतो राज्यमागतायाभिसत्कृतम्

न्यासं निर्यातयामास युक्तः परमया मुदा

65: ततस्तं वैष्णवे शूरं नक्षत्रेऽभिमतेश्वरिणि

वसिष्ठो वामदेवश्च सहितावभ्यषिञ्चताम्

66: सोऽभिषिक्तः कपिश्रेष्ठं सुग्रीवं ससुहृज्जनम्

विभीषणं च पौलस्त्यमन्वजानाद्गृहान्प्रति

64: tasmai tadbharato rājyamāgatāyābhisatkṛtam
nyāsaṁ niryātayāmāsa yuktaḥ paramayā mudā

65: tatastaṃ vaiṣṇave śūraṃ nakṣatre'bhimate'hani
vasiṣṭho vāmadevaśca sahitāvabhyasiñcatām

66: so'bhiṣiktaḥ kapiśreṣṭhaṃ sugrīvaṃ sasuhṛjjanam
vibhīṣaṇaṃ ca paulastyamanvajānādgrhānprati

Verse no. 64: Having held the kingdom in the form of a 'Trust', himself being its caretaker and manager-of-affairs, Bharat was extremely happy to return the throne and the crown to Lord Ram who had the first right to them (being the eldest brother, and first chosen to ascend the throne by none other than their father, king Dashrath, before the selfish Kaikeyi ruined everything by insisting that her son Bharat should be anointed as a king, and Lord Ram should be sent to forest for fourteen years)¹.

Verse no. 65: On an auspicious day and an auspicious nakshatra (constellation), sages Vasishta and Vamadev anointed Lord Ram as the king of Ayodhya and gave the crown to him².

Verse no. 66: After the coronation ceremony was over, Lord Ram summoned all his companions who had come with him aboard the Pushpak plane, and requested them to go home. Amongst them was Sugriva, foremost among monkeys and the king of Kishkindha, and Vibhishan, the son of Pulastya and the new king of Lanka³.

[Note--¹King Dashrath had decided to appoint Lord Ram, his eldest son, as the next ruler of Ayodhya. The decision was widely accepted and celebrations broke out in Ayodhya at that time, fourteen years ago^a, before Kaikeyi threw a spanner and brought the succession plan to a grinding halt^b. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, ^aChaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2--to Doha no. 8; ^bDoha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3, 7-8 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 12.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.]

67: अभ्यर्च्य विविधै रत्नैः प्रीतियुक्तौ मुदा युतौ
समाधायेतिकर्तव्यं दुःखेन विससर्ज ह
68: पुष्पकं च विमानं तत्पूजयित्वा स राघवः
प्रादाद्वैश्रवणायैव प्रीत्या स रघुनन्दनः
69: ततो देवर्षिसहितः सरितं गोमतीमनु
दशाश्वमेधानाजहे जारुथ्यान्स निरर्गलान्

67: abhyarcya vividhai ratnaiḥ prītiyuktau mudā yutau
samādhāyetikartavyaṃ duḥkhena visasarja ha

68: puṣpakam ca vimānaṃ tatpūjayitvā sa rāghavaḥ
prādādvaīśravaṇāyaiva prītyā sa raghunandanaḥ

69: tato devarṣisahitaḥ saritaṃ gomatīmanu
daśāśvamedhānājahre jārūthyānsa nirargalān

Verse no. 67: Lord Ram honoured them (i.e. Sugriv and Vibhishan--refer verse no. 66) with all kinds of jewels, and they were extremely happy and rejoiced¹. Having done his duty, the Lord, with a heavy heart, gave them permission to go home².

Verse no. 68: Having shown his due respects to Pushpak plane, Lord Ram, who was an illustrious descendant of the Raghu lineage, happily returned it to Vaishravana (Kuber)³.

Verse no. 69: Assisted by the great sages, Lord Ram performed ten horse sacrifices, without any obstructions, on the banks of the Gomati⁴, where three times the normal stipends or donations meant for such occasions were given."

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 17 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede it.

²The friends of Lord Ram were overwhelmed with sadness when they were asked to go home. Lord Ram's loving, caring and friendly nature had captured their hearts, and if a choice was given to them, they would have preferred to live in Ayodhya instead of returning home. But this was not practical as they were rulers of their respective kingdoms, Sugriv of Kishkindha, and Vibhishan of Lanka. Their presence in their own kingdom was in order of things, and it would be unwise to let them stay in Ayodhya longer than what was necessary^a. But seeing their affection for him, Lord Ram told them to come for visits as frequently as they wanted, and his doors were always open for them^b. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, ^aChaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 17; ^bChaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 20.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4-b.

⁴The river that flowed on the outskirts of the capital city of the kingdom of Ayodhya was known as 'Saryu'. It is to be noted at this juncture that the capital city had the same name as the kingdom. River 'Gomti', however, flows on the outskirts of the present-day city of Lucknow, which is about 135 km away from the present-day Ayodhya. It obviously means that in those ancient times, the boundaries of the kingdom of Ayodhya extended far and wide, with its capital, Ayodhya city, at the center. So therefore, there is nothing to be surprised at when we read that Lord Ram had performed his horse sacrifices on the banks of river Gomti which came under his realm.]

Thus ends Canto 275.

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PART A, Chapter 2

The Story of the Ramayana

Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurana

Canto (Skandha) 9, Chapters (Adhyaaya) 10-11

(A) Canto (Skandha) 9, Chapter (Adhyaaya) 10:

The Story of Lord Ram, known universally as the 'Ramayana', has been described in brief in Srimad Bhagwat, canto 9, chapters 10 and 11.

To begin with, chapter 10 narrates the glorious story of Lord Ram from the time of his birth in the royal family of Ayodhya till the time he returns victorious after his campaign of eliminating the demons of Lanka led by their powerful king Ravana who had been tormenting and terrorising the creatures of this world, defiling religious sacrifices, horrifying sages and other pious people, and even not sparing the gods from their terror.

Fed up with their constant nuisance, the gods and mother earth, led by the creator Brahma and the concluder Lord Shiva approached Lord Vishnu, the protector and caretaker of this creation, to save them. The Lord promised them that he himself would descend on earth in the form of Lord Ram to set things in order.

To keep his promise, Lord Vishnu assumed a human form and manifested himself as Lord Ram in the royal dynasty of king Raghu whose ancestor had descended from an ancient king named Ikshwaku.

The present 10th chapter of the 9th canto of Srimad Bhagwat starts this narration from a recent ancestor of Lord Ram, known as king Khatvanga (pronounced Khaṭvāṅga). Lord Ram's life is usually narrated in detail in other versions of the Ramayana, but for the sake of brevity, sage Shukdeo, the narrator, describes only the main events of the Ramayana that ended with the killing of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, and the Lord's return to his capital Ayodhya.

That said, now let us have a bird's eye view of the contents of this chapter.

The son of king Khatvanga was named Dirgabahu (pronounced Dīrghabāhu), and his son was Raghu. The son of Raghu was Aja, the son of Aja was king Dashrath, and the son of Dashrath was Lord Ram (also called Ramchandra). As has been mentioned above, Lord Ram was a manifestation of the Lord Vishnu who is the protector and caretaker of this world, and one of the deities of the Trinity (the other two being Lord Brahma, the creator, and Lord Shiva, the concluder of creation). When Lord Vishnu descended into this world as Lord Ram, he did so with all the four components of his celestial glory--as (i) Lord Ram (Rāmacandra), (ii) Laxman (Lakṣmaṇa), (iii) Bharata and (iv) Shatrughan (Śatrughna).

One of the great sages of the time was sage Vālmīki, who was enlightened and well acquainted with the transcendental reality of who Lord Ram was, described and recorded the Lord's life and time for the benefit of future generations so as to preserve

the Lord's legacy and glory for posterity, for all times to come. In Srimad Bhagwad, sage Shukdeo (Śukadeva) describes this story in brief.

Lord Ram's main objective in coming down to this mortal world was to eliminate the terror unleashed by cruel demons who felt that they were invincible due to certain boons they acquired as a result of severe penance and austerity. This made them very powerful and arrogant; they started torturing sages and tormenting the common man, preventing them from pursuing their religious duties, and leading a normal peaceful life. Even the gods were helpless against them. These demons were led by Ravana, and the island of Lanka was their capital.

In order to accomplish this task, Lord Ram went with sage Vishwamitra (Viśvāmitra) to protect his fire sacrifice that was continuously defiled by demons led by Subahu and Marich (Mārīca). While protecting this fire sacrifice, Lord Ram slayed the demon army led by Subahu, and he flung Marich to a far-away remote place.

The sage was mightily pleased, and he took Lord Ram and Laxman along to attend the marriage ceremony of Sita, the daughter of king Janak. One of the conditions of marrying Sita was to lift and break a very powerful and heavy Bow, called 'Haradhanu'. The word Haradhanu has two parts--'Hara' means Lord Shiva, and 'Dhanu' means a bow. This bow was given to king Janak by Lord Shiva in some ancient time. Upon receiving instructions from sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram broke this formidable bow and qualified to marry Sita. It is also narrated that one sage Parashuram (Paraśurāma) became very angry when he learnt of the breaking of the bow as it belonged to Lord Shiva to whom he was very devoted. Parashuram was famous for his ill-temper and ego. He came angrily to punish the person who broke the bow of his revered deity. In the oral confrontation that followed, the sage could not harm Lord Ram, and finally had to calm down and go back to continue with his religious pursuits.

When his father king Dashrath decided to anoint him as the kingdom's next king, Bharat's mother Kaikeyi, under the influence of fate, plotted a conspiracy to send Lord Ram to the forest, and instead have her own son crowned as the king. Giving effect to her plan, she forced Dashrath to send Lord Ram to the forest for fourteen years and put her son Bharat on the throne.

To obey the order of his father, Lord Ram went to the forest; he was accompanied by Sita (his wife) and Laxman (his younger brother). While living in the forest, the Lord had to cut off the nose of one demoness called Supernakha (Śūrpaṇakhā) to punish her as she was trying to trap the Lord into establishing a relationship with her. On her complaint, her companion demons Khar and Dushan (Khara and Dūṣaṇa) intervened on her behalf, and attacked the Lord with a huge demon army. In the battle that followed, all of them were killed.

After this debacle, Supernakha went to complain to her brother Ravana (Rāvaṇa), the powerful king of the demon race having his seat in Lanka, and instigated him to avenge her insult and injury. Unable to bear an open challenge to his authority, Ravana decided to kidnap Sita. This was the beginning of his misfortune and downfall.

To give effect to his scheme, he roped in Marich by forcing the latter to become a deer with a golden skin so that he could lure Sita to wish to have this wonderful and exotic creature as a pet. Upon Sita's insistence, Lord Ram went to trap and bring the deer, who actually was Marich in disguise, to his hermitage. During the Lord's absence, Ravana grabbed Sita and kidnapped her to Lanka.

When Lord Ram returned to his hermitage, he discovered that Sita was missing. Then Lord Ram and Laxman began their long search for her. In the course of

this search, the two brothers met Jatayu (Jaṭāyu), the old vulture who had tried to save Sita by fiercely battling with Ravana, but unfortunately the demon cut off his wings and he fell down on the ground.

Proceeding ahead, Lord Ram killed a demon called Kabandha who tried to obstruct his path. Further ahead in the path, Lord Ram met Sugriv (Sugrīva), the prince of the forest kingdom of Kishkindha. The Lord befriended him and restored his dignity and right to the throne by eliminating his selfish elder brother Vaali (Vāli) who had usurped the crown and threw Sugriv out. During the course of this development, a bond of friendship was established between Sugriv and Lord Ram, and the former promised the Lord that he would do all he could to find and free Sita.

With the help of his friend Sugriv, Lord Ram organised a huge army of monkeys and bears to launch a campaign to free Sita from the clutches of Ravana. The Lord and his army reached the shore of the ocean. The Lord tried to be polite and courteous with the patron deity of the ocean by asking the latter to give him and his army a safe passage to the shore of Lanka. But when Sumudra, the patron deity of the ocean, remained stubborn, the Lord decided to teach it a lesson by threatening it that he would use his fiery arrow to completely dry up the ocean's water.

Alarmed, Samudra appeared with gifts and advised Lord Ram that he should get a bridge constructed across it, with a promise that it would be safeguarded and prevented from getting washed off or sunk.

Hence, Lord Ram asked Sugriv to deploy competent and skilled technicians from amongst his monkey companions and get the bridge ready. Once the bridge was finished, the Lord and his massive army crossed the ocean to land on the soil of Lanka.

Previously, Hanuman (Hanumān), a trusted and faithful devotee of Lord Ram, who had been sent to Lanka to meet Sita and bring back her news, had burnt the city when attacked by the demons, as well as a token punishment for the them for keeping Sita captivated and in a miserable state.

Now, with Vibhishan (Vibhīṣaṇa)--the brother of Ravana who had earlier joined Lord Ram after being publicly humiliated by Ravana--by his side, Lord Ram finally launched an assault on the capital city of Lanka, and with the help of his brother Laxman, the Lord slayed all the demon warriors, including their king Ravana.

After Ravana died, his wife Mandodari (Mandodarī) and others grieved for him. On the instructions of Lord Ram, Vibhishan performed the last rites of all the dead members of his family in accordance with established traditions. Then Lord Ram anointed Vibhishan as the new king of Lanka, and blessed him with a long life.

Sita was freed from her captivity in the Ashoka grove (Aśoka forest). Then, Lord Ram returned to his capital of Ayodhya aboard an airplane along with Sita and Laxman. He also took along his friends from Kishkindha and Lanka, such as Sugriv (king of monkeys), Angad (prince of Kishkindha), Hanuman (the Lord's faithful lieutenant), Jamvant (Jāmbavān, the bear chieftain), Vibhishan (the newly appointed king of Lanka) among others.

When the Lord arrived in Ayodhya, he was warmly welcomed by his younger brothers Bharat and Shatrughan (Śatrughna). Lord Ram also met everyone else in the family as well as prominent citizens of Ayodhya. He also blessed common people who had gathered in large numbers to receive the Lord.

On an auspicious day and time, Lord Ram was crowned as the king of the kingdom of Ayodhya by sage Vashistha (Vasiṣṭha), the kingdom's chief priest. As part of this ceremony, Bharat brought Lord Ram's wooden footwear which the Lord had given him earlier to symbolically represent him as the de-facto king of Ayodhya

while he was in the forest. During this ceremony, Vibhishan held a whisk, Sugriv a fan, Hanuman carried a ceremonial umbrella over the Lord's head, Shatrughan carried the Lord's bow and quiver, Sita held a water-pot filled with consecrated water from holy places, Angad carried the sword, and Jamvant carried the shield.

The chapter ends with a brief description of the rule of Lord Ram as a king of Ayodhya.

With this background knowledge, let us now begin reading this chapter in detail as follows:

Skandha 9, Chapter 10

Verse no. 1:

श्रीशुक उवाच

खट्वाङ्गाद् दीर्घबाहुश्च रघुस्तस्मात् पृथुश्रवाः ।
अजस्ततो महाराजस्तस्माद् दशरथोऽभवत् ॥ १ ॥

śrī-śuka uvāca
khaṭvāṅgād dīrghabāhuś ca raghus tasmāt pṛthu-śravāḥ
ajas tato mahā-rājas tasmād daśaratho'bhavat /1/

Verse 1: Sage Shukadeo (Śukadeva) said: "The son of king Khatvanga (khaṭvāṅga) was Dirgabahu (Dīrghabāhu), and his son was the celebrated king Raghu. From king Raghu came king Aja, and from Aja was born the great king Dashrath (Daśaratha). {And, king Dashrath had four sons, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.} (1)

[Note--Srimad Bhagwat, Skandha (Canto) 9, Chapter 9 lists the kings who were immediate ancestors of Raghu, and in that list Khatvanga is mentioned as the last ruler.]

Verse no. 2:

तस्यापि भगवानेष साक्षाद् ब्रह्ममयो हरिः ।
अंशांशेन चतुर्धागात् पुत्रत्वं प्रार्थितः सुरैः ।
रामलक्ष्मणभरतशत्रुघ्ना इति संज्ञया ॥ २ ॥

tasyāpi bhagavāṇeṣa sākṣād brahmamayo hariḥ
aṁśāṁśeṇa caturdhāgāt putratvaṁ prārthitaḥ suraiḥ
rāma-lakṣmaṇa-bharataśatrughnā iti saṁjñayā /2/

Verse 2: Lord Vishnu, the benevolent caretaker and protector of the world and the second deity of the Trinity (the other two being Brahma, the creator, and Shiva, the concluder), who is worshipped even by the greatest of gods and sages, manifested himself in all his glory as Lord Ram, the eldest son of king Dashrath. The Lord's other three dimensions or aspects also descended on earth to accompany him as his three

brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan. All these four forms of the Divinity assumed a human form to become sons of king Dashrath. (2)

[Note--Lord Ram represented the principle aspect of the supreme Lord Vishnu, while Laxman represented the Lord's role as a supporter the world as he (Laxman) was a manifestation of Seshnath, the celestial serpent said to support the earth on its hood, and on the coiled body of whom Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean. Bharat represented the role of the Lord as the one who takes care of the needs of the world, and Shatrughan stands as the power of the Lord to vanquish enemies of the world. These four aspects are clearly defined in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram was not a human being as we understand the term to mean. He was an incarnation of the Supreme Being, someone who though having a human form was in fact 'divinity' personified. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 192.}

When the demons led by Ravana unleashed a rein of terror and mayhem in this creation, all the gods led by mother earth and great sages appealed to Lord Vishnu to save them. It was then that the Lord promised them that he would come down personally to take charge to bring order back and eliminate the scourge of the demons. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184--to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 187.}]

Verse no. 3:

तस्यानुचरितं राजन्नृषिभिस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ।

श्रुतं हि वर्णितं भूरि त्वया सीतापतेर्मुहुः ॥ ३ ॥

tasyānucaritaṁ rājann ṛṣibhis tattva-darśibhiḥ
śrutaṁ hi varṇitaṁ bhūri tvayā sītāpater-muhuh /3/

Addressing king Parikshit, who was listening to this story attentively, sage Shukdeo continued: "Oh king Parikshit (Parīkṣit)! The life and deeds of Lord Ram have been described by many enlightened and self-realised great sages and saintly persons. They are all qualified to do so (because of their ability to see and understand the truth that exists behind the veil of grossness that typically marks everything in this gross, mortal world). As you must have already heard the story of Lord Ram, the husband of Sita (sītāpate), in detail from such illustrious souls, so I shall be brief in my own narration. (3)

[Note--These enlightened and illustrious souls were qualified to narrate Lord Ram's story as they could see the subtle truth and sublime reality that existed behind the grossness of the external facade related to the worldly deeds done by the Lord in the form of a human being. Such wise and enlightened sages and seers are called 'tattva-darśis', i.e. those who are acquainted with and are knowledgeable about the Absolute Truth. Hence, their narration emphasise the divine aspect of Lord Ram, and differentiate him from other mortal human beings and their deeds. They emphasise the fact that Lord Ram's actions and behaviour should not be judged with a superficial understanding of what was visible, but with a deeper understanding that require analysis and research based on spiritual authority which could help one to peer behind

the curtain of what is visible on the outside so as to enable the seeker of truth to realise who Lord Ram was.

In our modern world, we read many interpretations and versions of Lord Ram's stories written by scholars and researchers, and most of them are based on gross analysis and worldly understanding of events of an era long-long ago. Most of these narratives are described in terms of one's own imaginations, speculations or material sentiments that are experienced by the authors of such narratives in the context of the present world. But the character of Lord Ram transcends such shallow and perfunctory understanding that is devoid of a spiritual element and understanding of what constitutes Absolute Truth and transcendental Consciousness as defined in the Upanishads.

The notable point in this verse is that sage Shukdeo tells Parikshit that 'he must have already heard the story of Lord Ram'--which implies that at this point of time, some five thousand years ago, there surely must have been many versions of the Ramayana in existence. That is why the sage warns the king that he should be very careful in selecting which version of the Ramayana he should hear and read--i.e. he should read or hear only that version which is authentic. And how will he know which version is authentic and which is not? The answer is that the version which had been written or narrated by learned and enlightened sages who always speak the truth, and who were acquainted with the truth and reality of Lord Ram is the one which a person should read or hear in order to avoid falling into the trap of confusions and doubts about Lord Ram and his divine nature. Hearing from a wrong source would convey a wrong message, and nothing worthwhile would be gained.]

Verse no. 4:

गुर्वर्थं त्यक्तराज्यो व्यचरदनुवनं पद्मपद्भ्यां प्रियायाः
पाणिस्पर्शाक्षमाभ्यां मृजितपथरुजो यो हरीन्द्रानुजाभ्याम् ।
वैरूप्याच्छूर्पणख्याः प्रियविरहरुषारोपितभ्रूविजृम्भ-
त्रस्ताब्धिर्बद्धसेतुः खलदवदहनः कोसलेन्द्रोऽवतान्नः ॥ ४ ॥

gurvarthe tyaktarājyo vyacarad anuvanaṁ padma-padbhyāṁ priyāyāḥ
pāṇi-sparśākṣamābhyāṁ mṛjita-patha-rujo yo harīndrānujābhyām
vairūpyāc chūrpaṇakhyāḥ priya-viraha-ruṣāropita-bhrū-vijṛmbha-
trastābdhir baddha-setuḥ khala-dava-dahanaḥ kosalendro'vatān naḥ /4/

To honour the words of his father (king Dashrath), Lord Ram decided to forgo his right to the throne of Ayodhya as its next king, and went to the forest for fourteen years. His wife Sita and his younger brother Laxman accompanied him. The Lord wandered from forest to forest on foot. The soles of his feet were as tender as petals of a lotus flower; they were so delicate and soft that they if Sita even touched them the Lord felt uneasy. {So just imagine the pain and suffering he might have had to face while walking on hard ground in the forest, with unpaved path strewn with stones, thorns, dried tree shoots and leaves, and other kinds of hard and pointed things which made walking very uncomfortable. Yet, the Lord never complained, so tolerant, resilient, resolute and self-controlled he was that he took physical sufferings in his stride and remained indifferent to them when it came to upholding his words and

commitment he had made to others, which in this case was the word given to his father that he would live like a hermit in the forest.}

During his wanderings in the forest, Lord Ram was accompanied by his younger brother Laxman who acted as his companion and friend, always ready to serve and support the Lord, and give him relief when he felt tired and sad.

In the forest, Lord Ram had cut-off the nose and ear of a demoness named Supernakha (Śūrpaṇakhā). This led to a series of events that culminated in Sita being kidnapped by the demon king Ravana¹.

Then Lord Ram went on further ahead in the forest in search of Sita. During this search he came in contact with Hanuman (who would become his life-long faithful devotee and lieutenant), and befriended Sugriv, the prince of the monkey race.

In the course of this search, Lord Ram (along with Laxman and others, such as Hanuman and Sugriv together with soldiers of the huge monkey and bear army that the Lord had collected with the objective of going to Lanka to free Sita from the clutches of Ravana, and, if the need arose, to fight a war with him to free Sita) reached the shore of the ocean. The ocean blocked further progress of the Lord (and his army), so the Lord became very annoyed and threatened the ocean with annihilation by using his fiery arrow to dry it up.

The deity of the ocean was alarmed; it came to ask for forgiveness with the Lord and promised to help him cross the water if a bridge was constructed on its surface. {The deity of the ocean, called Samudra, promised Lord Ram that it would support the construction of the bridge and won't sink it, nor sweep it away.}

Lord Ram, supported by the army of Kishkindha, crossed the ocean and entered Lanka to burn the evil city and its wicked demons like a raging fire destroys a forest. May that Lord Ramchandra grant protection to us all. (4)

[Note--¹Supernakha was a notorious demoness. She was known for her promiscuous nature. Once, she tried her tricks on Lord Ram. The Lord wanted to teach her a lesson on morality, so he chopped off her nose and ears to deform her as a punishment. She became infuriated and went to her brother Ravana to seek his help to take revenge against Lord Ram. Ravana took this as a challenge to his authority, and he decided to abduct Sita, Lord Ram's chaste wife, and keep her as a hostage in Lanka to settle scores with the Lord. This was the turning point in his life as it led to a series of developments culminating in his death and the rout of the demons.]

Verse no. 5:

विश्वामित्राध्वरे येन मारीचाद्या निशाचराः ।

पश्यतो लक्ष्मणस्यैव हता नैर्ऋतपुङ्गवाः ॥ ५ ॥

viśvāmitrādhvare yena mārīcādyā niśācarāḥ
paśyato lakṣmaṇasyaiva hatā nairṛta-puṅgavāḥ /5/

Earlier, Lord Ram had killed many demons (led by Subahu) when they had tried to defile the fire sacrifice performed by sage Vishwamitra (Viśvāmitra). These demons were classified as 'niśācarāḥ' because they had the habit of roaming in the night and attacking their victims taking shelter of darkness. {By extension, the word also means

wild creatures who used deceit and black-magic tricks to create a veil of delusions to deceive their prey and attack them on the sly.}

May Lord Ramchandra, who killed those wicked demons, be gracious and kind to grant us his protection. (5)

Verse nos. 6-7:

यो लोकवीरसमितौ धनुरैशमुग्रं सीतास्वयंवरगृहे त्रिशतोपनीतम् ।
आदाय बालगजलील इवेक्षुयष्टिं सज्ज्यीकृतं नृप विकृष्य बभञ्ज मध्ये ॥ ६ ॥
जित्वानुरूपगुणशीलवयोऽङ्गरूपां सीताभिधां श्रियमुरस्यभिलब्धमानाम् ।
मार्गे व्रजन् भृगुपतेर्व्यनयत् प्ररूढं दर्पं महीमकृत यस्त्रिरराजबीजाम् ॥ ७ ॥

yo loka-vīra-samitau dhanuraisamugram sītā-svayaṁvara-gr̥he
triśatopanītam /
ādāya bālagajalīla ivekṣuyaṣṭim sajjyīkṛtaṁ nṛpa vikṛṣya babhañja
madhye /6/
jītvānūrūpa-guṇa-śīla-vayoṅga-rūpāṁ sītābhidhām śriyam urasy
abhilabdhāmānām /
mārgē vrajan bhr̥gupater vyanayat prarūḍhaṁ darpaṁ mahīm akṛta
yastirarājajām /7/

Oh King! The deeds of Lord Ram were very wonderful and interesting like those of a young elephant. For instance, in the assembly where a husband for Sita was to be selected, and where great heroes of the world had assembled to try their luck, Lord Ram had broken a very stern and heavy bow belonging to Lord Shiva. It was so heavy that three hundred men were needed to lift it. But Lord Ram picked it up as if it was a mere straw and broke it in the middle by bending it just like a young elephant would break a stick of sugarcane. With this remarkable feat, Lord Ram was successful in having Sita's hand in marriage¹.

Sita was famed for her virtuous nature, beauty and all other good values and characters that made her stand out from others. She was like a goddess of good fortune who rested on the bosom of Lord Ram (i.e. lived in his heart as the Lord's beloved)².

On his way back home to Ayodhya with his wife Sita and the marriage party, Lord Ram met an angry sage Parashuram (Paraśurāma). The sage was famous for his short-temper and ego, as well as a compulsive hatred for kings belonging to the Kshatriya race to which Lord Ram belonged; he had eliminated all the kings of the earth twenty-one times. Parashuram confronted Lord Ram for breaking of the bow, but the Lord prevailed over him. Ultimately, the sage asked for forgiveness and went back to his hermitage to pursue his religious practices. (6-7)

[Note--¹Sita's father, king Janak, had set a condition that anyone who could lift and break an old bow of Lord Shiva that was lying with him would become eligible to marry Sita. Thousands of princes and warriors tried their hands but failed. Finally, Lord Ram lifted and broke the bow to become qualified to marry Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249--to Doha

no. 250; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 261.}

²Sita was an incarnation of goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of prosperity and wealth and the divine consort of Lord Vishnu. When Lord Vishnu decided to descend on earth in the form of Lord Ram, Laxmi too came down as Sita. Hence, their union was a natural consequence of it. Sita represented the cosmic Shakti (dynamic powers) of the Supreme Being. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 187.}

³The sage mistook the breaking of the bow of Lord Shiva in the wrong light, thinking that it was intentionally done to insult Shiva. So he came to confront Lord Ram. But eventually the Lord prevailed over him and the sage returned to his hermitage.]

Verse no. 8:

यः सत्यपाशपरिवीतपितुर्निदेशं
स्त्रेणस्य चापि शिरसा जगृहे सभार्यः ।
राज्यं श्रियं प्रणयिनः सुहृदो निवासं
त्यक्त्वा ययौ वनमसूनिव मुक्तसङ्गः ॥ ८ ॥

yaḥ satya-pāśa-parivīta-pitur nideśaṁ
straiṇasya cāpi śirasā jagṛhe sabhāryaḥ /
rājyaṁ śriyaṁ praṇayinaḥ suhr̥do nivāsaṁ
tyaktvā yayau vanam asūn iva mukta-saṅgaḥ /8/

Carrying out the order of his father, who was bound by a promise to his wife (Kaikeyi)¹, Lord Ram left behind his kingdom, opulence, friends, well-wishers, residence and everything else, just as a liberated soul gives up all material things in this world and finds freedom from all attachments, and went to the forest with his wife Sita.

[Note--¹In the past, king Dashrath had promised his wife Kaikeyi that he would fulfil any two wish she desires to have from him. At that time she kept it pending, saying that she will seek its redemption in the future at an appropriate time. It so happened, by the dictate of fate, that when the king declared his intention to crown his eldest son Lord Ram as the next king of Ayodhya, which was perfectly in order and in accordance with the rules of succession of the time, Kaikeyi's maid Manthara hatched a conspiracy so that instead of Lord Ram, Bharat, the son of Kaikeyi, would ascend the throne. She believed that if Bharat became a king, then she would have special privileges and lord over all other servants of the royal household. So, she somehow convinced her mistress Kaikeyi that the king neglected her, though she thought that he loved her more than his other two queens, as he didn't consult her while deciding to anoint Lord Ram to the throne. To add fuel to fire, Manthara also told Kaikeyi that if the king succeeds in his plan, then her son Bharat would be sidelined for of his life, assigned some inconsequential job in the kingdom, and Kaikeyi would live a

neglected and ignored life in the sprawling palace as some junior queen, forced to remain confined to her quarters.

Kaikeyi trusted Manthara so much that she took her words on face value, and did not judge for herself what the serious consequences would be if she acted on her wicked and selfish maid's advice. Kaikeyi then recalled the two pending promises that her husband, king Dashrath, had vowed to redeem in the future. Exploiting this loophole, Kaikeyi forced the king to send Lord Ram to the forest for fourteen years, and appoint her son Bharat to the throne. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 12--to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.}

This episode is the turning point in the story of the Ramayana as everything that followed revolved around this single development--Lord Ram being sent to the forest for fourteen years. Why did Kaikeyi decide on fourteen years and not a shorter or longer period? Because she thought that it was sufficiently long time for Bharat to establish and reinforce his control over the kingdom, its army, its citizenry and its administrative machinery. And chances of Lord Ram surviving the ordeal of forest life, which obviously would be harsh and tough to cope with for a young prince, and returning to claim his right to the throne, was almost negligible. In case the Lord still managed to survive and return home, Bharat would be so powerful by that time that it would be very easy for him tackle any challenge to his crown, either by throwing Lord Ram into prison, or stop him from returning altogether.

To avoid the blame of completely banishing Lord Ram to the forest and making sure that Bharat remains a king for the rest of life, a totally unacceptable proposition which was sure to instigate revolt in the kingdom, she decided for a shorter period of fourteen years, which when compared to a man's full life duration, was only a fraction. In case any powerful citizen confronts her, she could always say that she has no objection of Lord Ram returning and ascending the throne at the end of fourteen years, and she has no malafide or ill intentions against him. She just wanted to test Dashrath's boast that he is very truthful and always ready to uphold his promises and words given to others. So, this ruse would calm the agitated citizens, and allow time for Bharat to have a firm hold on everything.]

Verse no. 9:

रक्षःस्वसुर्यकृत रूपमशुद्धबुद्धे-
स्तस्याः खरत्रिशिरदूषणमुख्यबन्धून् ।
जघ्ने चतुर्दशसहस्रमपारणीय-
कोदण्डपाणिरटमान उवास कृच्छ्रम् ॥ ९ ॥

rakṣaḥ-svasur vyakṛta rūpam aśuddhabuddhe-
stasyāḥ khara-triśira-dūṣaṇa-mukhya-bandhūn /
jaghne caturdaśa-sahasram apāraṇīya-
kodaṇḍa-pāṇir aṭamāna uvāsa kṛcchram /9/

While wandering in the forest, Lord Ram accepted a life of hardship as lived by a hermit. He carried his infallible bow and arrows in his hand wherever he went. One day it so happened that the Lord punished Ravana's sister (Supernakha), who was very polluted with lusty desires and had tried to trap Lord Ram by her lascivious

gestures, by cutting off her nose and ears. He also killed her fourteen thousand demon companions led by Khara, Trishira and Dushan.

[Note--While Lord Ram lived at a place called 'Panchavati', an area deep in the forest and infested by demons, one day a demoness named Supernakha, who was the demon king Ravana's sister, felt passionate when she saw the handsome form of the young prince. Being lustful and promiscuous by nature, she tried to lure the Lord into a trap of establishing a relationship with her. Lord Ram saw through her mischief, and to teach her a lesson he asked Laxman to cut off her ears and nose.

This was the first time in her life that Supernakha had suffered such humiliation. She was furious. She ran to her brothers Khara, Trishira and Dushan, asking them to take revenge. These demon commanders were appointed by Ravana to guard the northern frontiers of his extended realm; they had a large demon army at their disposal. So therefore, all of them attacked Lord Ram, and in the battle that followed, the Lord eliminated all of them. {This part of the story of the Ramayana is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17-to Doha no. 20.}

This episode was the second critical turning point in the story of the Ramayana as Lord Ram would now come in direct confrontation with Ravana because Supernakha went straight to Lanka and complained to him. She knew the weakness of the demon king for beautiful women, so she exploited this loophole in his character to motivate him to kidnap Sita, who was remarkably beautiful, and bring her to Lanka. This way, not only would she be able to take revenge on Sita's husband, Lord Ram, for deforming her, but also for the Lord killing so many demons, including her brothers, who had gone to settle scores with him on behalf of her.]

Verse no. 10:

सीताकथाश्रवणदीपितहृच्छयेन
सृष्टं विलोक्य नृपते दशकन्धरेण ।
जघ्नेऽद्भुतैणवपुषाश्रमतोऽपकृष्टो
मारीचमाशु विशिखेन यथा कमुग्रः ॥ १० ॥

sītā-kathā-śravaṇa-dīpita-hṛcchayena
sr̥ṣṭam vilokya nr̥pate daśa-kandhareṇa /
jaghne 'dbhutaṇa-vapuṣāśramato 'pakṛṣṭo
māricam āśu viśikhena yathā kam ugraḥ /10/

{Sage Shukdeo said--} "Oh king Parikshit! When Ravana, who had ten heads on his shoulders (or, ten necks and ten heads), heard about the remarkable beauty and charming features of Sita, his own lustful nature was ignited. He decided to go and bring Sita to Lanka by kidnapping her. In order to give effect to his nefarious design, he forced another demon named Marich to assume the form of a deer with a golden skin and frolic around the Lord's hermitage. Sure enough, when Sita saw this rare and exotic specimen of a deer with a golden skin, she asked Lord Ram to go and kill it, and bring its hide¹.

To fulfil her desire, Lord Ram went behind the deer, pursuing it for a long distance. Finally, the Lord killed it with his arrow² just as Lord Shiva had once killed Daksha.

[Note--¹This specific request of Sita has been mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 27.

²In general terms, this entire episode is described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24-to Doha no. 28.

Why did Ravana, who was exceptionally powerful and had an invincible demon army at his disposal, not attack Lord Ram directly, defeat him, and bring Sita as a trophy of battle? The answer is this: when he learnt from Supernakha that Lord Ram had killed Khara, Trishira and Dushan along with thousands of brave demon soldiers, he became nervous. If someone was so strong and powerful that he would single-handedly eliminate them, then surely that gentleman was not to be taken lightly. This fact is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 22 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow it.]

Verse no. 11:

रक्षोऽधमेन वृकवद् विपिनेऽसमक्षं
वैदेहराजदुहितर्यपयापितायाम् ।
भ्रात्रा वने कृपणवत् प्रियया वियुक्तः
स्त्रीसङ्गिनां गतिमिति प्रथयंश्चचार ॥ ११ ॥

rakṣo'dhamena vṛkavad vipine'samakṣaṁ
vaideha-rāja-duhitary apayāpitāyām /
bhrātrā vane kṛpaṇavat priyayā viyuktaḥ
strī-saṅgināṁ gatim iti prathayaṁś cacāra /11/

When Lord Ram had gone far away in the forest pursuing the deer, and Laxman was sent by Sita to search for him (after he did not come for sometime, and she heard a distress call made by Marich mimicking the Lord's voice calling out to Laxman for help), she was left alone and unprotected in the hermitage, giving Ravana an opportunity to kidnap her. So he seized her and forcefully took her away (to Lanka)¹ just like a tiger pounces upon an unprotected sheep and drags it away when the shepherd is not there to protect the poor sheep.

When the Lord and his younger brother came back to the hermitage and found Sita absent, they were very distressed. Lord Ram's sorrows knew no bounds upon separation from his wife².

Laxman consoled him and encouraged him to have courage and resilience. Then, the two brothers wandered here and there in the forest in search of Sita. By this act, Lord Ram gave an example of how a man would feel when he is emotionally very much attached to his wife.³

[Note--¹This part of the episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-14 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 30.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-17 that precede Doha no. 30.

The Lord showed by his own example what sufferings a person undergoes if he becomes too much attached to a woman. Although Lord Ram had tried his best to avoid bringing Sita along to the forest, but he had to yield as he realised that if left her back in Ayodhya, she would not survive. That in itself would be unrighteous as it would be tantamount to pushing someone to the extremes of agony that is beyond the person's ability to cope with, leading to death.

As all the versions of the Ramayana stress, Lord Ram was not a human being though he had the form of one. He was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the second of the Trinity gods and the divinity who is responsible for taking care of the creation. As such, he is beyond such gross, material and worldly considerations as being attached to a woman and grieving for her loss. Sita too was not an ordinary lady but the cosmic Shakti (dynamic energy of creation) personified.

Why then did Lord Ram behave as he did? The crucial answer to this question of Lord Ram's behaviour resembling an ordinary human being is that he wanted to keep his primary cosmic identity as the Supreme Being secret so that Ravana would think that he was an ordinary prince. This would lead Ravana to actually confront the Lord him in the belief that he would easily vanquish the Lord, for Ravana had conquered even the most powerful of gods of heaven. So, from Ravana's viewpoint, conquering a man who is alone in the forest with no support of any kind, no matter how powerful he might personally be, is a joke for him. Should Ravana become aware of the fact that Lord Ram was the 'Supreme Being who has come down to earth on the prayers of the gods with the sole objective of eliminating him', then either he would have surrendered and ask for forgiveness, or run away and hide somewhere. In the former case, Lord Ram, famed as a compassionate, merciful, forgiving and benevolent Lord, would be compelled to excuse Ravana, and in the latter case it would be impossible for the Lord to search for Ravana in every nook and corner of this vast creation. In either of the two cases, the very purpose of Lord Vishnu taking the trouble of assuming the form of a mortal human being and coming down to earth to live an ordinary life of a human being like the rest of this race, would come to a naught. So, secrecy and discretion was the call of the day.

By the way, it ought to be pointed out here that it was simply impossible for Ravana to kidnap Sita against her wishes, as was the 'cosmic energy personified, possessing dynamism and strength'. She voluntarily allowed herself to be taken away by Ravana, weeping and lamenting all the way, to hide her true personality, just like Lord Ram lamented and grieved at the loss of Sita to hide his own true personality. Hence, both Lord Ram and Sita acted in tandem to give effect to a larger objective of eliminating the scourge and tyranny of the demons who had been relentlessly tormenting sages, saints and gods, defiling religious practices, and taking pleasure in upending the cart of law and order in this world.]

Verse no. 12:

दग्ध्वात्मकृत्यहतकृत्यमहन् कबन्धं
 सख्यं विधाय कपिभिर्दयितागतिं तैः ।
 बुद्ध्वाथ वालिनि हते प्लवगेन्द्रसैन्यै-
 र्वैलामगात् स मनुजोऽजभवार्चिताङ्घ्रिः ॥ १२ ॥

dagdhvātma-kṛtya-hata-kṛtyam ahan kabandham
 sakhyam vidhāya kapibhir dayitā-gatiṁ taiḥ /
 buddhvātha vālini hate plavagendra-sainyai-
 rvelām agāt sa manujo'ja-bhavārcitāṅghriḥ /12/

Lord Ram moved ahead in search for Sita and met a wounded vulture named Jatau. Ravana had mortally wounded Jatau as the latter tried to save Sita by clashing with Ravana as he was on his way to Lanka. Jatau died from his wounds, and Lord Ram performed his funeral and did last rites himself in accordance with religious practices¹.

Moving ahead, the Lord was confronted by Kabandha (a weird demon who had only a trunk that contained his mouth, with no head, arms or legs) whom the Lord killed².

Further on his journey through the wilderness, Lord Ram met and befriended the prince of the monkey race (i.e. Sugriv) and other chieftains of the kingdom (of Kishkindha)³.

At the request of his friend Sugriv, Lord Ram killed Vaali (who had done grave injustice to Sugriv by usurping his right to the throne, snatching his wife, and throwing him out of the capital to live in exile)⁴. {Then, Lord Ram reinstated Sugriv on the throne of Kishkindha.}

Sugriv was obliged, and in order to reciprocate the Lord's help to him to regain his wife and the right to the crown of the kingdom of Kishkindha, Sugriv collected a huge army of monkey and bear warriors to help Lord Ram recover his own wife Sita⁵.

With this huge army, Lord Ram, whose lotus-like holy feet are worshipped by Lord Brahma (the creator) and Lord Shiva (the concluder of creation), reached the northern shores of the southern ocean (in the middle of which the island of Lanka was established as the capital of the demon race)⁵.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-21 that precede Doha no. 29. When Jatau tried to intervene, Ravana cut off the vulture's wings, compelling the bird to fall down, seriously wounded. When Lord Ram met Jatau, the latter was the first one to tell the Lord that Sita had been abducted by Ravana. Lord Ram showed extreme love and compassion for the vulture and performed the latter's last rites as he would have done for his own father.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 33. Kabandha had become a demon due to a curse by sage Durbasa who was renowned for his short temper.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1--to Doha no. 4.

Moving further ahead in the south direction, Lord reached the kingdom of the monkey race, called Kishkindha. Here he met and become friends with Sugriv, the exiled prince of the kingdom.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6-to Doha no. 11.

By what Sugriv told the Lord, he realised that great injustice had been done to his friend Sugriv by the latter's elder brother Vaali. So, the Lord decided to bring Vaali to book by killing him and restoring Sugriv's honour.

One critical thinking in Lord Ram's mind that led him to side with Sugriv against his brother Vaali was that by this strategy, Sugriv would feel obliged to the Lord and willing to reciprocate the Lord's help extended to him to gain the kingdom's crown. Since a large army was needed to vanquish Ravana, the powerful king of the demons, this newly formed alliance with Sugriv would help the Lord in arranging for such an army. And indeed, this is actually what happened: Sugriv put all his resources at the disposal of Lord Ram, which included the regular army as well as the reserve soldiers of the kingdom of Kishkindha. The Lord knew fairly well that vanquishing Ravana was not going to be cake-walk; he needed an 'army'. And this alliance with Sugriv was kind of a god-sent golden opportunity which the Lord must not miss.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 and Chanda line nos. 18 that precede it.]

Verse no. 13:

यद्रोषविभ्रमविवृत्तकटाक्षपात-
सम्भ्रान्तनक्रमकरो भयगीर्णघोषः ।
सिन्धुः शिरस्यर्हणं परिगृह्य रूपी
पादारविन्दमुपगम्य बभाष एतत् ॥ १३ ॥

yad-roṣa-vibhrama-vivṛtta-kaṭākṣa-pāta-
sambhrānta-nakra-makaro bhaya-gīrṇa-ghoṣaḥ /
sindhuh śirasy arhaṇaṁ parigrhya rūpī
pādāravindam upagamya babhāṣa etat /13/

After reaching the shore of the ocean, Lord Ram fasted and did penances for three days, allowing sufficient time for the deity of the ocean to give permission to the Lord so that he and his army could go across the water. But the ocean remained stubborn, and did not appear to hear the Lord's pleading.

Finally, Lord Ram decided to teach the deity of the ocean a lesson. So, the Lord looked at the water of the ocean with anger in his eyes. His gaze was so fiery that all the marine creatures, such as sharks and crocodiles, who lived in the ocean became agitated with fear of getting boiled alive if the Lord continued with his gazing.

Fearing annihilation, the deity of the ocean finally relented. He assumed a physical form (of a Brahmin) and approached Lord Ram with paraphernalia needed to

worship the Lord as well as to welcome him by offering a lot of gifts found in the ocean's belly.

Falling at the Lord's feet, the deity spoke to him very politely.

[Note--This event is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 57--to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 59.

While in our present narration in Srimad Bhagwad, it is said that Lord Ram gazed fiercely at the ocean and his eyes virtually spewed fire and brimstone which would have heated the water to such a high temperature that the ocean would have started to boil, in Ram Charit Manas it is said that Lord Ram pulled out one of his fire-tipped arrows that would have served the same purpose.]

Verse no. 14:

न त्वां वयं जडधियो नु विदाम भूमन्
कूटस्थमादिपुरुषं जगतामधीशम् ।
यत्सत्त्वतः सुरगणा रजसः प्रजेशा
मन्योश्च भूतपतयः स भवान् गुणेशः ॥ १४ ॥

na tvāṁ vayaṁ jaḍa-dhiyo nu vidāma bhūman
kūṭa-stham ādi-puruṣaṁ jagatām adhiśam /
yat-sattvataḥ sura-gaṇā rajasah prajeśā
manyōś ca bhūta-patayaḥ sa bhavān guṇeśaḥ /14/

The deity of the ocean said to Lord Ram: "Oh Lord! While you are a personified form of the Supreme Divinity, we are, on the other hand, creatures who have a dull mind and are gross by our very nature that is very similar to that of animals (jaḍa-dhiyaḥ). Hence, because of the dullness of my mind, I had initially failed to understand who you actually are. But now I have come to realise that you are the Supreme Being who is the lord of the entire creation. As such, I, the deity representing the ocean, am one of your subjects.

All the gods, demi-gods (such as Indra-the king of gods in heaven, Prajapati-the king of other inhabitants of heaven such as spirits, and Yama-the god of death and hell) have knowledge that is limited to the world under their domain. They are ignorant beyond their fields. Further, everyone of them has varying degrees of the three Gunas in them. But Lord, you are the all-knowing and omniscient Lord of the entire creation, and nothing is therefore secret from you. Besides that, you are the master of all the three Gunas, and therefore they have no effect on you, enabling you to remain neutral under all circumstances and situations, thereby making it possible for you to view everything equally and in a balanced manner.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 59.

There are three types of Gunas or basic qualities that govern a person's attitude, outlook and behavioural pattern in this world. They are (i) Satvik, (ii) Rajsik, and (iii) Tamsik. The 'Satvik' guna is the best and makes a person noble, praiseworthy and honourable. The 'Tamsik' is the worst guna characterised by extreme grossness,

passion, corruption, indulgence in negativity and other such deplorable qualities. The 'Rajsik' is in between the two, having some quality of both the other two gunas, but having some of its own--such as the ones usually possessed by rulers and kings; they have to often times appear to be stern and uncompromising in order to enforce the rule of law in the land, and in the course of such enforcement there may be chances that innocent persons are also punished for no fault of theirs, probably in the interest of the majority of the population. When such a case is examined, it has the element of both Tamsik as well as Satvik qualities because an innocent person is made to suffer for no fault of his, but on the other hand the action was needed in the larger good of the society. Here, the king's action can be classified under the Rajsik guna as the king often has to take an unpleasant decision that can neither be called Satvik nor Tamsik exclusively.]

Verse no. 15:

कामं प्रयाहि जहि विश्रवसोऽवमेहं
 त्रैलोक्यरावणमवाप्नुहि वीर पत्नीम् ।
 बध्नीहि सेतुमिह ते यशसो वितत्यै
 गायन्ति दिग्विजयिनो यमुपेत्य भूपाः ॥ १५ ॥

kāmaṁ prayāhi jahi viśravaśo'vamehaṁ
 trailokya-rāvaṇam avāpnuhi vīra patnīm /
 badhñihi setum iha te yaśaso vitatyai
 gāyanti digvijayino yam upetya bhūpāḥ /15/

My Lord! I am at your service; you can use the water of the ocean in any way you think useful and convenient. I welcome you to go to Lanka and kill Ravana to retrieve your wife Sita. Ravana has become a great nuisance for the whole world, disturbing everyone and breaking all norms. Though he is a son of the revered sage Vishrava (Viśravā), but is condemned and polluted like one's urine¹.

Oh Lord, though I will not be an impediment in you crossing the water to reach Lanka (by ordering all my inhabitants, such as huge-bodied fish and other marine creatures to come together to stand side by side, thereby making the surface as hard and solid as land on which your entire army would be able to walk to the other side), still I would advise you to please construct a bridge across the surface of the water as this remarkable deed (of taming the heaving and rough waters of the ocean to put together a floating bridge across it) would be watched by wonder by everyone, which in turn would establish your fame throughout the present world, as well as for all times to come in the future. All future kings and heroes would glorify you for this unique feat²."

[Note--¹Urine is primarily made of water which is a fundamental necessity of life; nothing will survive without water. But while everyone drinks water, no one would like to drink urine. What the deity of the ocean means here is that while sage Vishrava is so renowned for his goodness and is respected in the world, his own son Ravana is condemned and loathed by the same world.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 59-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60.]

Verse no. 16:

बद्धवोदधौ रघुपतिर्विविधाद्रिकूटैः

सेतुं कपीन्द्रकरकम्पितभूरुहाङ्गैः ।

सुग्रीवनीलहनुमत्प्रमुखैरनीकै-

र्लङ्कां विभीषणदृशाविशदग्रदग्धाम् ॥ १६ ॥

baddhvodadhau raghu-patir vividhādri-kūṭaiḥ
setuṁ kapīndra-kara-kampita-bhūruhāṅgaiḥ
sugrīva-nīla-hanumat-pramukhair anīkair
laṅkāṁ vibhīṣaṇa-dṛśāviśad agra-dagdhām /16/

Sage Shukdeo continued: "The majestic (floating) bridge over the surface of the ocean was constructed by throwing it in countless numbers of peaks of mountains along with huge boulders and giant trees with their long and sturdy creepers, branches, stems and roots that had been uprooted by monkey warriors from all over the surrounding areas and dumped into the water¹.

Once the construction was complete, Lord Ram moved ahead on his mission to enter Lanka to liberate Sita from the clutches of the demon king Ravana. The main advisor of the Lord in this process was Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana², who accompanied the Lord when he entered Lanka.

Alongside Lord Ram, Sugriv (the king of the monkeys), Neel, Hanuman and other chieftains also entered Lanka which had previously been burnt (by Hanuman during his first visit in search of Sita)³.

[Note--¹The actual construction work was carried out by the two monkey brothers Nala and Neel who were architects of the kingdom. Hanuman and Angad stood guard. This bridge caused a huge blockade that resulted in obstruction in the free flow of the water of the ocean and forcing marine creatures such as crocodiles and sharks and whales to pile up against its side just like a roadblock on a national highway creates a massive traffic jam in today's world with vehicles piling up on either side, bumper to bumper. But as the deity of the ocean had promised Lord Ram, no one dared to break or breach this barrier. The jam-packed two sides of the ocean added to its actual width, because when the time came for the colossal army of Lord Ram to cross over to Lanka, a large number of monkeys and bears walked over the backs of these marine creatures who had lined up tightly side-by-side on both sides of the bridge. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2; (ii) Doha no. 3-to Doha no. 4.}

Like skilled masons and architects, Nala and Neel tied all the materials thrown into the water with the help of long creepers and tender stems and branches of trees. Countless marine creatures that packed on both sides of this bridge, as well as underneath it, helped to act as supports and embankments that kept everything firmly in place.

²Vibhishan knew every secret of Lanka and its fortifications, with all its strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge was used by him to advise Lord Ram on a variety of issues, such as from where to land on the shores of Lanka, at what time, and how to breach the security of Lanka, overcome its guards and neutralise them. Vibhishan's role in the defeat of Ravana serves as a stellar example of what happens to a person who antagonises someone who is very close to that person and knows every secret. By publicly humiliating Vibhishan and throwing him out of Lanka, Ravana had dug his own grave. Vibhishan led the charge against Ravana by revealing every secret of the defences of Lanka, the strength of its army, the weapons it uses and the method to neutralise them, and in the final day of the war even disclosing to Lord Ram the secret manoeuvring by which Ravana could be killed. All attempts of Lord Ram to kill Ravana had miserably failed till Vibhishan betrayed his own brother to take revenge on him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 101-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 102; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 103.}

Even a cursory reading of the story of the Ramayana would make it abundantly clear that without Vibhishan's help, it would have been virtually impossible for Lord Ram to successfully invade Lanka, conquer it, and kill Ravana in the final hours of the war.

³Hanuman's burning of Lanka has been described in all the versions of the Ramayana. It has been narrated briefly in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 24-to Doha no. 26.]

Verse no. 17:

सा वानरेन्द्रबलरुद्धविहारकोष्ठ-
श्रीद्वारगोपुरसदोवलभीविटङ्का ।
निर्भज्यमानधिषणध्वजहेमकुम्भ-
शृङ्गाटका गजकुलैर्हृदिनीव घूर्णा ॥ १७ ॥

sā vānarendra-bala-ruddha-vihāra-koṣṭha-
śrī-dvāra-gopura-sado-valabhī-viṭaṅkā /
nirbhajyamāna-dhiṣaṇa-dhvaja-hema-kumbha-
śṛṅgāṭakā gaja-kulair hradinīva ghūrṇā /17/

After entering Lanka, the monkey soldiers, led by their king Sugriv and other chief commanders such as Neel, Hanuman etc., went on the rampage. They occupied all the sporting houses, granaries, treasuries, palaces along with their terraces, porticos, gardens and doorways, gates of the city, assembly houses, resting houses for pigeons, and all other places in the city. Verily, with the city's squares, flag-posts, platforms, gilded water-pots and flower-pots, gardens, recreational areas and other public places ravaged, the city (which once was the most beautiful places on earth and rivalled the city of gods in heaven) was rendered bare and devastated as if huge herd of wild elephants had gone berserk in a beautiful river, wildly splashing around and churning its clean waters, dirtying it, and ruining the beauty of the river and its surrounding areas in a general way.

Verse no. 18:

रक्षःपतिस्तदवलोक्य निकुम्भकुम्भ-
धूमाक्षदुर्मुखसुरान्तकनरान्तकादीन् ।
पुत्रं प्रहस्तमतिकायविकम्पनादीन्
सर्वानुगान् समहिनोदथ कुम्भकर्णम् ॥ १८ ॥

rakṣaḥ-patistadavalokya nikumbha-kumbha-
dhūmrākṣa-durmukha-surāntaka-narāntakādīn /
putraṁ prahastam atikāya-vikampanādīn
sarvānugān samahinod atha kumbhakarṇam /18/

When the news of the destruction of Lanka by the invading monkey army reached Ravana, the lord of the demons, he became agitated and furious. He immediately summoned his chief demon commanders such as Nikumbha, Kumbha, Dhumraksha, Durmukha, Surantaka, Narantaka and other brave and fearless warriors.

He also summoned his invincible son Indrajit (also known as Meghanad), along with Prahasta, Atikaya and Vikampana. Finally, he called for Kumbhakarna (Ravana's younger brother).

After they were all assembled, Ravana briefed them about the challenge they suddenly face, and the need to protect the honour of the demon race; he ordered them to go and tackle the enemy forthwith, with all their might and resources.

Verse no. 19:

तां यातुधानपृतनामसिशूलचाप-
प्रासर्ष्टिशक्तिशरतोमरखड्गदुर्गाम् ।
सुग्रीवलक्ष्मणमरुत्सुतगन्धमाद-
नीलाङ्गदक्षपनसादिभिरन्वितोऽगात् ॥ १९ ॥

tām yātudhāna-pṛtanām asi-śūla-cāpa-
prāsarṣṭi-śaktiśara-tomara-khaḍga-durgām /
sugrīva-lakṣmaṇa-marutsuta-gandhamāda-
nīlāṅgadarkṣa-panasādibhir anvito'gāt /19/

The brave and ferocious demon warriors were armed with all sorts of powerful weapons, such as swords, sickles, lances, spears, tridents, bows and fiery arrows, javelins, and spiked iron balls attached to chains (which are swung around to dash the enemy).

Lord Ram, when he observed that the demon army has come forth to challenge his army of monkeys, the Lord took charge and moved forward with his brother Laxman and chief commanders such as Sugriv, Hanuman, Gandhamada, Neel,

Angad, Jamvant (the bear chieftain), Pansa etc. They advanced to face the demon soldiers.

Verse no. 20:

तेऽनीकपा रघुपतेरभिपत्य सर्वे
 द्वन्द्वं वरूथमिभपत्तिरथाश्वयोधैः ।
 जघ्नर्द्रुमैर्गिरिगदेषुभिरङ्गदाद्याः
 सीताभिमर्षहतमङ्गलरावणेशान् ॥ २० ॥

te 'nīkapā raghupater abhipatya sarve
 dvandvaṁ varūtham ibha-patti-rathāśva-yodhaiḥ /
 jaghnur drumair giri-gadeṣubhir aṅgadādyāḥ
 sītābhimarṣa-hata-maṅgala-rāvaṇeśān /20/

Lord Ram's brave soldiers, with Angad (the prince of the monkeys) leading the charge, rushed forward to face the demon army consisting of elephants, horses, infantry and chariots. The monkey soldiers hurled huge trees, as well as stones and boulders that resembled small and big hills respectively, at the demon warriors; they used thick trunks and branches of trees as clubs and maces, and other pointed objects as spears and lancets. {The monkey warriors found an abundance of such objects in the ruins of the buildings and walls of the city of Lanka itself. The rubble of the city came in handy for the monkeys who grabbed large chunks and hurled them with mighty force at the demon warriors, crushing them, dashing their heads, and mortally wounding them. The public parks and gardens, as well as the surrounding forests, orchards and groves were rich sources of trees with their trunks, stems, branches, creepers etc. that were all employed as weapons of different sorts. Similarly, the hills and mountains of the island of Lanka provided the raw material for boulders and stones that were conveniently used as missiles and rockets with which to slam the demon army.}

In the ferocious battle that followed, Lord Ram's warriors chased the army of demons and killed countless demon warriors. Ravana faced rout because he had been cursed by the auspicious Sita, and thus being already condemned, he had virtually lost the war even before it had actually begun.

[Note--The army of Ravana was well trained and lived in a city, Lanka; it had access to all the advanced weaponry of that ancient time. But the army of Lord Ram were monkeys and bears who lived in forests, hills and mountains. So, the latter used those things as weapons with which they were acquainted and well versed in usage, such as trees, boulders, stones and other objects that were abundantly available in mountains and forested areas of the island of Lanka. Further, the ruins of the city of Lanka came in handy to the soldiers of Lord Ram, for they grabbed large chunks of demolished buildings and walls to hurl them with great force at the demons. Similarly, the devastated public and private gardens and parks, as well as the surrounding forests, orchards and groves provided all kinds of trees with their trunks, branches and creepers, all of which were employed successfully as weapons.

Not only physical objects were freely used to attack the demon army by the monkeys, but the monkeys also used their sharp teeth and nails to fiercely bite and scratch and tear apart the flesh of the demon soldiers. The monkeys, who were skilled in jumping and leaping from tree to tree as part of their ordinary life in the forest, attacked the demon soldiers from all the sides just like a swarm of angry bees attacks a person, using their skills to jump at the demon soldiers, clink to their bodies, tear out their hair, ears, nose and eyes, or gnaw into their flesh so deeply that the demons panicked and fled, throwing their weapons and feeling absolutely exasperated as they tried to save themselves from this sudden and unexpected attack that directly inflicted misery to them from close quarters. Weapons were of no use against those monkey warriors who clung to the bodies of demons and started tearing out their body parts. Thus, the demons lost interest in fighting the enemy standing on the ground before them as now they were absorbed in attempting to protect themselves from the fierce biting, scratching and shearing-off of their body parts by the monkeys who attacked them from all the sides.

In this war, there were two kinds of forces that were pitted against each other--forces of evil represented by Ravana and his demon soldiers, and forces of good represented by Lord Ram and his monkey and bear warriors. In the end, the forces of good won over the forces of evil.]

Verse no. 21:

रक्षःपतिः स्वबलनष्टिमवेक्ष्य रुष्ट
आरुह्य यानकमथाभिससार रामम् ।
स्वःस्यन्दने द्युमति मातलिनोपनीते
विभाजमानमहनन्निशितैः क्षुरप्रैः ॥ २१ ॥

rakṣaḥ-patiḥ sva-bala-naṣṭim avekṣya ruṣṭa
āruhya yānakam athābhisaśāra rāmam /
svaḥ-syandane dyumati mātalinopanīte
vibhrājamānam ahanan niśitaiḥ kṣurapraiḥ /21/

When Ravana observed that his army has been routed and was in a distressed state, he became very angry and decided to intervene personally. He called for his airplane, which was decorated with flowers, and proceeded towards Lord Ram to directly face him in the battle-field¹.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram too mounted a glittering chariot sent to him by Indra, the king of gods. This chariot belonged to Indra and was driven by Matali, Indra's personal charioteer².

Ravana attacked Lord Ram with a volley of sharp arrows.

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 88.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 89.]

Verse no. 22:

रामस्तमाह पुरुषादपुरीष यन्नः
कान्तासमक्षमसतापहृता श्ववत् ते ।
त्यक्तत्रपस्य फलमद्य जुगुप्सितस्य
यच्छामि काल इव कर्तुरलङ्घ्यवीर्यः ॥ २२ ॥

rāmas tam āha puruṣāda-purīṣa yan naḥ
kāntāsamakṣam asatāpahṛtā śvavat te /
tyakta-trapasya phalam adya jugupsitasya
yacchāmi kāla iva kartur alaṅghya-vīryaḥ /22/

Lord Ram said to Ravana: "You are the most abominable amongst the cruel man-eating demons. Indeed, you are special and stand out in this class of monstrous, hateful, sinful and terrible creatures just like someone who stands on a stool and is marked as being special and noticeably different from all others who are standing on the ground around him.

You are most contemptible, lowly and cowardly creature who is like a dog¹ that steals eatables from the kitchen while the householder is absent from the site, because you had kidnapped my wife Sita while I was away.

Therefore, just as Yamraj, the patron god of death who takes a condemned person to hell for all the sins that person had committed in life, I will now punish you for your sins and evil acts. You are the most shameless, hateful, abominable and detestable creature alive, and therefore you deserve the treatment reserved for such evil ones. I am the one who would give this punishment to you today, and be sure of it as my words don't go in vain.

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 28.

A dog looks to left and right when it wants to steal some eatable surreptitiously from some place. The dog wants no one to know that it has entered the kitchen to steal food, for it is fearful of being caught in the act and beaten mercilessly. It glances to the left and the right to make sure it is not being watched. It is so nervous of being caught and so afraid of being thrashed that besides slyly looking to the left and the right, it also bends its tail downwards and tucks it under its belly between its hind legs.

This was the way Ravana had approached Sita before abducting her. He was very nervous and suspicious of being caught red-handed. So he glanced to the left and the right to make sure no one is hiding somewhere and watching him, only to pounce upon him when he least expects the attack.]

Verse no. 23:

एवं क्षिपन् धनुषि संधितमुत्ससर्ज
बाणं स वज्रमिव तद्धृदयं बिभेद ।

सोऽसृग् वमन् दशमुखैर्न्यपतद् विमाना-
द्वाहेति जल्पति जने सुकृतीव रिक्तः ॥ २३ ॥

evam kṣipan dhanuṣi sandhitam utsasarja
bāṇam sa vajram iva tad-dhrdayam bibheda /
so'sṛg vaman daśa-mukhair nyapatad vimānād
dhāheti jalpati jane sukr̥tīva riktah /23/

After having thus rebuked the sinful Ravana sternly for his evil nature and sinful deeds, Lord Ram raised his invincible bow, fixed an arrow on it, and shot it at Ravana. The arrow slammed into Ravana and pierced his heart like the strike of thunderbolt.

When the demon army saw this development, there was a tumultuous uproar as the alarmed demon soldiers cried out in frustration, disbelief and dismay: 'Alas, Alas! What has happened; how come our invincible king has suffered such a setback so easily!'

Ravana staggered for a moment, started vomiting blood from all his ten heads, and fell down from his airplane. His condition was like that of a man who falls down to earth from heaven once the effects of his good deeds and pious acts done in his life are exhausted¹.*

[Note--¹At the time of his death, a man goes to heaven as a reward for the good deeds, pious acts and religious activities that he had done while alive. But as soon as the accumulated reward points are exhausted, the man comes back down to earth from his exalted stature in the heaven, to re-enter the mortal world and its cycle of birth and death.

This particular fact is reiterated in the Srimad Bhagwat Gita, chapter 9, verse no. 21 where Lord Krishna says: 'those who seek enjoyment through rituals prescribed in the vedas, they achieve temporary happiness in heaven, but as soon as the merit exhausts, such persons return to the mortal world consisting of the cycle of birth and death.'

*It is to be noted here that the war of Lanka lasted for many days. But in the narrative of Srimad Bhagwat which we are reading currently, it ended very quickly. Even the battle between Lord Ram and Ravana continued for many days, but it ends abruptly in a single verse here. In other words, this version of the Ramayana is very brief, and only mentions the events without going into details.]

Verse no. 24:

ततो निष्क्रम्य लङ्काया यातुधान्यः सहस्रशः ।
मन्दोदर्या समं तत्र प्ररुदन्त्य उपाद्रवन् ॥ २४ ॥

tato niṣkramya laṅkāyā yātudhānyaḥ sahasraśaḥ /
mandodaryā samam tatra prarudantya upādravan /24/

Then, all the women whose husbands had fallen in the battle, came out of the city to mourn. They were led by their grieving queen Mandodari, the wife of Ravana. They wept and wailed continuously as they approached the dead bodies of Ravana and all other dead demons lying scattered on the ground of the battle-field¹.

[Note--¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-13 that precede Doha no. 104.]

Verse no. 25:

स्वान् स्वान् बन्धून् परिष्वज्य लक्ष्मणेषुभिरर्दितान् ।
रुरुदुः सुस्वरं दीना घ्नन्त्य आत्मानमात्मना ॥ २५ ॥

svān svān bandhūn pariṣvajya lakṣmaṇeṣubhir arditān /
ruruduḥ susvaram dīnā ghnantya ātmānam ātmanā /25/

While Mandodari wailed and grieved by the side of Ravana's dead body, other demon wives struck their chests in grief and sorrow as they embraced the dead bodies of their respective husbands. All those grief-stricken demonesses wailed and lamented piteously, which made everyone who watched them become overwhelmed with sorrow and sadness himself. The dark and sombre mood of the battle-field at that time was like that of a graveyard with thousands of dead bodies that have come to get buried at the same time.

Verse no. 26:

हा हताः स्म वयं नाथ लोकरावण रावण ।
कं यायाच्छरणं लङ्का त्वद्विहीना परार्दिता ॥ २६ ॥

hā hatāḥ sma vyaṁ nātha loka-rāvaṇa rāvaṇa /
kaṁ yāyāc charaṇaṁ laṅkā tvad-vihīnā parārditā /26/

Mandodari lamented: "Oh my lord, oh my master! You spelled misery and suffering for others; you made others cry and wail due to your excesses. That is why you were called 'Ravana'--i.e. someone who makes others cry and lament aloud. {Hence, your defeat and death are the result of your own sins and evil nature, and no one else is to blame for your misfortune. For the saying is 'one reaps what one sows', or 'actions have their consequences which are in consonance with and directly related to those actions'.}

You have invited your misfortunes yourself by spending your life in senseless cruelty and evilness. Nevertheless, with your defeat and death, we too feel defeated and lifeless, like someone walking in shame with the head bent down, or someone alive and breathing but paralysed in the whole body, or someone walking in sleep, unconscious of the reality of the outside world. {Say, oh lord, what is the use of living such a life? It would have been better if we too had died alongside you.}

Oh lord! Without you, Lanka has been orphaned, rendered like a family which has lost its angel guardian, or a person who has lost a patron and protector, or a body which has lost its head. With you being conquered, the entire Lanka has been conquered by the enemy. With you dead, where will the citizens of Lanka now go for shelter and succour; who will protect us now; who will have pity on us?

Verse no. 27:

न वै वेद महाभाग भवान् कामवशं गतः ।
तेजोऽनुभावं सीताया येन नीतो दशमिमाम् ॥ २७ ॥

na vai veda mahā-bhāga bhavān kāma-vaśaṁ gataḥ /
tejo 'nubhāvaṁ sītāyā yena nīto daśām imām /27/

Oh great and honourable lord of all of us in Lanka! I am sorry to say that you had come under the influence of delusions and overcome with lusty desires. Hence, you could not restrain yourself from eying Sita, or understand that she was no ordinary lady (but the cosmic Shakti personified)¹. This error of judgement led to your ruin. It is by her curse that you have been reduced to this state of a dead body, having been killed by her husband Lord Ram (about whom too you had failed to understand that he was not an ordinary man but a personified form of the Supreme Lord himself).

[Note--Sita's case is a classical example of how a chaste and honourable woman who is loyal to her husband acquires great powers. This virtue in Sita gave her immense moral strength and a quiet form of spiritual power that made her as holy, pure and inviolable as the fire. The fire has the unique ability to burn all kinds of rubbish put into it, without it getting sullied or having its purity defiled.

An honourable and praiseworthy person is one who considers another's wife as his mother, another's possessions as a lump of dirt, and treats all other living beings as he would treat himself. Ravana lacked all these virtues.]

Verse no. 28:

कृतैषा विधवा लङ्का वयं च कुलनन्दन ।
देहः कृतोऽन्नं गृध्राणामात्मा नरकहेतवे ॥ २८ ॥

kṛtaiṣā vidhavā laṅkā vayaṁ ca kula-nandana /
dehaḥ kṛto'nnam gr̥dhrāṇām ātmā naraka-hetave /28/

Oh lord, you were our honour and we derived pleasure while living under your protection. With your death, both the state of Lanka as well as we citizens have been left without a lord and protector.

Alas! Your own evil deeds have brought this misfortune unto you and unto to all of us. Your own evil deeds have condemned you that your dead body has been made fit to be eaten by vultures, and your soul fit to go to hell."

Verse no. 29:

श्रीशुक उवाच

स्वानां विभीषणश्चक्रे कोसलेन्द्रानुमोदितः ।

पितृमेधविधानेन यदुक्तं साम्परायिकम् ॥ २९ ॥

śrī-śuka uvāca

svānām vibhīṣaṇaścakre kosalendrānumoditaḥ /

pitṛ-medha-vidhānena yad uktam sāmparāyikam /29/

Sage Shukdeo continued with his narration: "Meanwhile, Vibhishan, who was a brother of Ravana but a pious soul and a devotee of Lord Ram, received instructions from the latter, who was the Lord of Kaushal (kosalendra), to go and perform the prescribed rites and funeral ceremonies for the dead members of his family¹ so that their souls are freed from going to hell.

[Note--¹These dead members were Ravana and his brother Kumbhakarna, Vibhishan's elder brother, and Indrajit, Ravana's son and nephew of Vibhishan.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 105 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 30:

ततो ददर्श भगवानशोकवनिकाश्रमे ।

क्षामां स्वविरहव्याधिं शिंशपामूलमाश्रिताम् ॥ ३० ॥

tato dadarśa bhagavānaśoka-vanikāśrame /

kṣāmām sva-viraha-vyādhim śimśapā-mūlam-āśritām /30/

Thereafter, Lord Ram found Sita sitting in a small cottage beneath a tree called 'Sinshupa' in a garden of Ashoka trees. She had become emaciated due to continuous distress caused by her separation from her husband Lord Ram.

[Note--This verse clearly indicates that Lord Ram had gone inside the city of Lanka to meet Sita after the war ended. But according to other main-stream versions of the Ramayana, Sita was brought to the battle-field under the escort of Vibhishan and Hanuman. Lord Ram had ordered Vibhishan to go with Hanuman and bring Sita to him with due respect and observation of decorum. This is explicitly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107-to Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 108.]

Verse no. 31:

रामः प्रियतमां भार्या दीनां वीक्ष्यान्वकम्पत ।

आत्मसन्दर्शनाहलादविकसन्मुखपङ्कजाम् ॥ ३१ ॥

rāmaḥ priyatamām bhāryām dīnām vīkṣyānvakampata /
ātma-sandarśanāhlāda-vikasan-mukha-paṅkajām /31/

Seeing his beloved wife (priyatamām bhāryām) in that miserable condition, Lord Ram was moved with compassion and sorrow for her. When the Lord stood before Sita, she was overjoyed with happiness, and her lotus-like face and her demeanours clearly showed how immensely happy she was.

Verse no. 32:

आरोप्यारुरुहे यानं भ्रातृभ्यां हनुमद्युतः ।

विभीषणाय भगवान् दत्त्वा रक्षोगणेशताम् ।

लङ्कामायुश्च कल्पान्तं ययौ चीर्णव्रतः पुरीम् ॥ ३२ ॥

ārōpyāruruhe yānaṁ bhrātr̥bhyām hanumad-yutaḥ /
vibhīṣaṇāya bhagavān dattvā rakṣo-gaṇeśatām /
laṅkāma yuś ca kalpāntaṁ yayau cīrṇa-vrataḥ purīm /32/

Since the mandated fourteen year period of living in the forest for Lord Ram had ended, the Lord decided to return home to Ayodhya immediately¹. He therefore first placed Sita on a plane (i.e. the Pushpak plane)² and then boarded it himself along with Laxman, Hanuman and other chieftains of Kishkindha. {They included Sugriv, Angad, Jamvant, Neel, Nala and others³.}

Before departure for Ayodhya, Lord Ram crowned Vibhishan as the king of Lanka, and as the lord of the demon race that still survived the war⁴, till the end of one Kalpa (kalpāntaṁ)⁵.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116; and (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. (i), stanza line nos. 1-2; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1.

Lord arrived in Ayodhya right on time, on the last day of his fourteen years of forest living. When only one day was left for this period to end, the people of Ayodhya, along with Bharat, Lord Ram's younger brother, had become very nervous and worried as there was no sign of the Lord's arrival. So, as soon as the plane had arrived near the borders of Ayodhya, the Lord sent Hanuman urgently as his messenger to quickly fly to Ayodhya and inform everyone that the Lord has finally arrived. Meanwhile, the Lord decided to make a quick stop-over at the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj to pay homage to the sage as still one day's time was available to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 121.

²Lord Ram did now wish to take any kind of risk. So he asked Sita to board the plane before him so as to ensure that no last minute problems are created. The Lord was suspicious of the demons; he was worried that if he boarded the plane before Sita,

then some mischief-monger amongst the surviving demons might wish to avenge the defeat of the demon army by playing some kind of dirty trick and tinker fraudulently with the automatic controls of the Pushpak plane which would have the plane become air-borne while Sita was still on the ground. That would have been a very nasty situation at the last moment.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 118-b and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

Not all the demons were killed in the war. It was not that the city of Lanka was completely de-populated and left as a barren piece of land. There were many commanders who had sided with Vibhishan during the latter's bitter parting and stand-off with Ravana. Besides these chief commanders, thousands of demon soldiers had survived the war, as did all the female demons of Lanka whose husbands and kin had died. So, quite a large population of the demon race had survived the vicious war. This surviving demon population thrived and grew under Vibhishan's rule, but unlike their previous king Ravana, the demons were now more tamed and led a more regulated and lawful lives. It means that though they were still classified as a 'demon race', yet their way of living and deeds had undergone a drastic shift from one that was ruthless and cruel, to one that was more ordinary, quiet and regulated, one that followed the laws of right living, and not disturbing others unnecessarily.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116-d.

One Kalpa is a very long period of time. Here it simply means Lord Ram blessed Vibhishan with a long and happy life as well as kingship of Lanka till the end of the world.

Kalpa, Manvantar and Yugas are measurements of time and duration of eras. References: (i) Vishnu Puran, Chapter 2, Canto 8, verse nos. 60-68; (ii) Tripadvibhuta Maha-Naryan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, paragraph nos. 8, 10-15.

(a) 1 *Kalpa* is equivalent to 1 day in the creator Brahma's total life span of 100 years. Each Kalpa consists of 1000 four-Yug cycles, called the 'Chatur Yugs'. The visible creation's one life-span consisting of this four-Yug cycle called the 'Chatur Yugs' is this one day of Brahma. At the end of this Chatur Yug, there would be dissolution or the so-called 'dooms-day' when everything would be submerged in water. Then the next phase of life consisting of the next four-Yug cycle would start.

(b) Each Kalpa (i.e. 1 day of Brahma's life) is also divided into 14 Manvantars, and each such Manvantar is ruled by one Manu, the first male. Therefore, 1 Manu rules over 71.42 (1000/4) four-Yug cycles.

We are now passing through the 51st year of Brahma's life, and our present Kaliyug belongs to the 7th Manvantar out of the 14 Manvantars, and its Manu is called Vaivasvata, and it is 28th Kaliyug of the four-Yug cycle.

In human years, 1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion years.]

Verse no. 33:

अवकीर्यमाणः सुकुसुमैर्लोकपालार्पितैः पथि ।
उपगीयमानचरितः शतधृत्यादिभिर्मृदा ॥ ३३ ॥

avakīryamāṇaḥ sukusumair lokapālārpitaiḥ pathi /
upagīyamāna-caritaḥ śatadhr̥ty-ādibhir mudā /33/

When Lord Ram returned to his capital of Ayodhya, he was welcomed warmly. The citizens as well as members of the royal household lined the streets to shower fragrant and colourful flowers upon him. Great gods such as the creator Brahma too joined in the celebrations by showering flowers upon the Lord from the sky, while other junior gods glorified the Lord and his virtues by singing hymns in his praise.

Verse no. 34:

गोमूत्रयावकं श्रुत्वा भ्रातरं वल्कलाम्बरम् ।
महाकारुणिकोऽतप्यज्जटिलं स्थण्डिलेशयम् ॥ ३४ ॥

go-mūtra-yāvakaṁ śrutvā bhrātaraṁ valkalāmbaram /
mahā-kāruṇiko'tapyaj jaṭilaṁ sthaṇḍile-śayam /34/

When Lord Ram reached Ayodhya, he came to know that his brother had been living a life of a hermit, doing severe penance and observing strictest forms of austerity, such as eating barley cooked in the urine of a cow, covering his body with the bark of trees, wearing matted locks of hairs, and lying on a mattress made of kusha grass¹. The Lord was very much moved and felt sorry for Bharat.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326; (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 1-b.]

Verse nos. 35-38:

भरतः प्राप्तमाकर्ण्य पौरामात्यपुरोहितैः ।
पादुके शिरसि न्यस्य रामं प्रत्युद्यतोऽग्रजम् ॥ ३५ ॥
नन्दिग्रामात् स्वशिविराद् गीतवादित्रनिःस्वनैः ।
ब्रह्मघोषेण च मुहुः पठद्भिर्ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥ ३६ ॥
स्वर्णकक्षपताकाभिर्हैमैश्चित्रध्वजै रथैः ।
सदश्वै रुक्मसन्नाहैर्भटैः पुरटवर्मभिः ॥ ३७ ॥
श्रेणीभिर्वारमुख्याभिर्भृत्यैश्चैव पदानुगैः ।
पारमेष्ठ्यान्युपादाय पण्यान्युच्चावचानि च ।
पादयोन्यपतत् प्रेम्णा प्रक्लिन्नहृदयेक्षणः ॥ ३८ ॥

bharataḥ prāptam ākarṇya paurāmātya-purohitaiḥ /
 pādūke śīrasi nyasya rāmaṁ pratyudyato'grajam /35/
 nandigrāmāt sva-śibirād gīta-vāditra-niḥsvanaiḥ /
 brahma-ghoṣeṇa ca muhuḥ paṭhadbhir brahmavādibhiḥ /36/
 svarṇa-kakṣa-patākābhir haimaiś citra-dhvajai rathaiḥ /
 sad-aśvai rukma-sannāhair bhaṭaiḥ puraṭavarmabhiḥ /37/
 śreṇībhir vāra-mukhyābhir bhr̥tyaiś caiva padānugaiḥ /
 pārameṣṭhyāny upādāya paṇyāny uccāvacāni ca
 pādāyor nyapatat premṇā praklinna-hṛdayekṣaṇaḥ /38/

When Bharat came to know that Lord Ram was returning to Ayodhya, the capital city, he immediately made arrangements to receive the Lord with all paraphernalia needed for extending a royal welcome to him.

First, he took Lord Ram's wooden sandals, that he had earlier placed on the throne of the kingdom to symbolically represent the Lord as a de-facto king during his physical absence, and carried them reverentially on his head as he emerged from his hermitage at Nandigram¹ to join the procession that went forth to welcome the Lord on his arrival. He was accompanied by ministers, priests, senior citizens and learned Brahmins who were chanting hymns from the Vedas. The procession also included court musicians and singers who sang welcome songs, as well as specially decorated chariots drawn by horses with golden harnesses. These chariots had flags and banners of all sizes with royal insignia embroidered in golden thread. Countless servants and royal attendants walked on foot carrying pots with consecrated water, royal umbrellas, whisks, plates with royal jewellery and other auspicious items such as betel nuts, along with many other paraphernalia befitting a royal reception. The soldiers that escorted this procession were bedecked in golden armour.

In this way, Bharat led the procession to warmly welcome Lord Ram to his capital of Ayodhya. Bharat's heart was brimming with love for his dear elder brother whose arrival he had been eagerly awaiting.

As soon as the two brothers came face to face, Bharat, with his eyes welling up with tears of emotions and his heart overwhelmed with ecstasy, fell down at the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram.

[Note--¹Bharat had gone to the forest to try to persuade the Lord to return home. But Lord Ram explained to him that it would not be proper to go against the wish of their father, king Dashrath, specially when he had died. On Bharat's request, Lord Ram gave him his own wooden sandals to represent the Lord during his absence. When he returned to Ayodhya, Bharat respectfully placed these sandals on the throne of the kingdom to symbolically represent the Lord as the kingdom's king-in-absentia, and himself retired to a nearby village called Nandigram to live like a hermit till the Lord comes back. Now that the Lord was back, Bharat took these sandals to give them back to him so that he can wear them as he stepped into the capital.]

Verse nos. 39-40:

पादुके न्यस्य पुरतः प्राञ्जलिर्बाष्पलोचनः ।
 तमाश्लिष्य चिरं दोर्भ्यां स्नापयन् नेत्रजैर्जलैः ॥ ३९ ॥

रामो लक्ष्मणसीताभ्यां विप्रेभ्यो येऽर्हसत्तमाः ।
तेभ्यः स्वयं नमश्चक्रे प्रजाभिश्च नमस्कृतः ॥ ४० ॥

pāduke nyasya purataḥ prāñjalir bāṣpa-locanaḥ /
tam āśliṣya ciraṁ dorbhyāṁ snāpayan netrajair jalaiḥ /39/
rāmo lakṣmaṇa-sītābhyāṁ viprebhyo ye 'rha-sattamāḥ /
tebhyaḥ svayaṁ namaścakre prajābhiś ca namaskṛtaḥ /40/

After offering the wooden sandals to Lord Ram, Bharat stood before the Lord with joined palms of his hands as a gesture of reverence. Bharat's eyes were wet with tears. Lord Ram, whose eyes were also full of tears, embraced his younger brother Bharat most affectionately, and this embrace lasted for quite a long time as the two loving brothers had met after a very long period of separation.

Thence, along with Sita and Laxman, Lord Ram offered his obeisance to the Brahmins and other elderly persons who had come to receive him. The Lord also met all the citizens and showed all of them due respect.

[Note--This re-union has been elaborately described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 3--to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 6.]

Verse no. 41:

धुन्वन्त उत्तरासङ्गान् पतिं वीक्ष्य चिरागतम् ।
उत्तराः कोसला माल्यैः किरन्तो ननृतुर्मुदा ॥ ४१ ॥

dhunvanta uttarāsaṅgān patim vīkṣya cirāgatam /
uttarāḥ kosalā mālyaiḥ kiranto nanṛtur mudā /41/

The citizens of Ayodhya were ecstatic with joy and happiness on seeing their beloved king, Lord Ram, return hale-and-heartily back to the kingdom after a long absence. They offered Lord Ram colourful flower garlands, waved flags jubilantly, and danced in merriment.

Verse nos. 42-43:

पादुके भरतोऽगृह्णाच्चामरव्यजनोत्तमे ।
विभीषणः ससुग्रीवः श्वेतच्छत्रं मरुत्सुतः ॥ ४२ ॥
धनुर्निषङ्गाञ्छत्रुघ्नः सीता तीर्थकमण्डलुम् ।
अबिभ्रदङ्गदः खड्गं हैमं चर्मक्षराण्णप ॥ ४३ ॥

pāduke bharato'grhṇāccāmara-vyajanottame /
vibhiṣaṇaḥ sasugrīvaḥ śveta-cchatraṁ marut-sutaḥ /42/

dhanur-niṣaṅgāñ chatrugnah sītā tīrtha-kamaṇḍalum /
abibhrad aṅgadaḥ khaḍgaṁ haimaṁ carmarkṣa-rāṇ nṛpa /43/

{Sage Shukdeo continued with his narration to king Parikshit--} "As the procession proceeded to enter the gates of Ayodhya, Bharat carried Lord Ram's wooden footwear, Sugriv and Vibhishan carried a whisk and a fan respectively, Hanuman carried a white ceremonial umbrella, Shatrughan (Bharat's brother) carried a bow and two quivers. Sita carried a water-pot filled with consecrated water from holy places, Angad carried a sword, and Jamvant, the chief of the bear community, carried a golden shield.

Verse no. 44:

पुष्पकस्थो नुतः स्त्रीभिः स्तूयमानश्च वन्दिभिः ।
विरेजे भगवान् राजन् ग्रहैश्चन्द्र इवोदितः ॥ ४४ ॥

puṣpaka-stho nutaḥ strībhiḥ stūyamānaś ca vandibhiḥ /
vireje bhagavān rājan grahaiś candra ivoditaḥ /44/

From the outskirts of Ayodhya at a place near Nandigram (where the Lord's plane Pushpak had landed), Lord Ram boarded the Pushpak plane once again to enter the city. This plane was decorated with flowers. Women (who had come out of the city to join the procession to welcome the Lord) also boarded the plane and offered prayers for the Lord's welfare, while royal bards and minstrels recited verses describing the Lord's qualities and lauding his glories.

Verse nos. 45-46:

भ्रात्राभिनन्दितः सोऽथ सोत्सवां प्राविशत् पुरीम् ।
प्रविश्य राजभवनं गुरुपत्नीः स्वमातरम् ॥ ४५ ॥
गुरून् वयस्यावरजान् पूजितः प्रत्यपूजयत् ।
वैदेही लक्ष्मणश्चैव यथावत् समुपेयतुः ॥ ४६ ॥

bhrātrābhinanditaḥ so'tha sotsavāṁ prāviśat purīm /
praviśya rāja-bhavanam guru-patnīḥ sva-mātaram /45/
gurūn vayasāvarajān pūjitaḥ pratyapūjayat /
vaidehī lakṣmaṇaś caiva yathāvat samupeyatuḥ /46/

Subsequently, after having been warmly received by his brother Bharat (at Nandigram on the outskirts of the capital city), Lord Ram entered the city of Ayodhya amid large-scale festivities that celebrated his homecoming.

Upon arrival in the royal palace, Lord Ram met all his mothers, including Kaikeyi (Bharat's mother and the one who was behind the conspiracy to send the Lord to the forest) as well as his own mother Kaushalya.

The Lord then offered his obeisance to his guru and the kingdom's chief priest, sage Vashistha. The Lord's old friends welcomed him enthusiastically, and the Lord reciprocated their gesture warmly. Likewise, both Laxman and Sita reciprocated the warm gestures and affections that everyone showed to them.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 6-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

Verse no. 47:

पुत्रान् स्वमातरस्तास्तु प्राणांस्तन्व इवोत्थिताः ।
आरोप्याङ्केऽभिषिञ्चन्त्यो बाष्पाघैर्विजहुः शुचः ॥ ४७ ॥

putrān sva-mātaras tās tu prāṇāms tanva ivotthitāḥ /
āropyāṅke'bhiṣiñcantyo bāṣpaughair vijahuḥ śucaḥ /47/

When the mothers of Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, who were sad and despondent till now, saw their sons coming to meet them together, they got up immediately as if lifeless bodies have suddenly been injected with consciousness. Filled with love and joy, they rushed forward to clasp their sons to their bosoms, and when they sat down again, they placed the heads of their sons on their laps. Tears (of joy and happiness) rolled down the eyes of the mothers in streams so as to soak the four brothers. This tearful re-union softened the heart of the mothers and relieved them of the overwhelming sense of grief and distress of separation from their beloved sons from which they had been suffering for such a long time.

Verse no. 48:

जटा निर्मुच्य विधिवत् कुलवृद्धैः समं गुरुः ।
अभ्यषिञ्चद् यथैवेन्द्रं चतुःसिन्धुजलादिभिः ॥ ४८ ॥

jaṭā nirmucya vidhivat kula-vṛddhaiḥ samam guruḥ /
abhyāṣiñcad yathaivendram catuḥ-sindhu-jalādibhiḥ /48/

Sage Vashistha, the chief priest of the kingdom, had the long matted hairs on Lord Ram's head shaved. Then, with the aid of elderly Brahmins and other senior citizens, he performed the 'Abhishek' (bathing) ritual of the Lord. For this purpose, water from the four seas or oceans was used, along with other items traditionally used for this kind of ritual. This ritualistic ceremony was done in the same manner as was done for Indra, the king of gods, during his anointment ceremony as the king of heaven.

[Note--This verse briefly describes the crowning ceremony of Lord Ram as the king of Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 49:

एवं कृतशिरःस्नानः सुवासाः स्रग्व्यलङ्कृतः ।
स्वलङ्कृतैः सुवासोभिर्भातृभिर्भार्यया बभौ ॥ ४९ ॥

evam kṛta-śiraḥ-snānaḥ suvāsāḥ sragvy-alāṅkṛtaḥ /
svalāṅkṛtaiḥ suvāsobhir bhrātr̥bhir bhāryayā babhau /49/

After taking a bath and getting his matted hairs shaved, Lord Ram dressed himself in splendid royal clothes and a ceremonial robe; he was adorned with jewellery and garlands that matched his royal wear. Alongside him, his wife Sita and brother Laxman too were similarly decorated with brilliant apparels, along with matching garlands and jewellery. {The three, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman standing next to each other, shone like a celestial phenomenon when three suns shine together.}

Verse no. 50:

अग्रहीदासनं भ्रात्रा प्रणिपत्य प्रसादितः ।
प्रजाः स्वधर्मनिरता वर्णाश्रमगुणान्विताः ।
जुगोप पितृवद् रामो मेनिरे पितरं च तम् ॥ ५० ॥

agrahīd āsanaṁ bhrātrā praṇipatya prasāditāḥ /
prajāḥ sva-dharma-niratā varṇāśrama-guṇānvitāḥ /
jugopa pitṛvad rāmo menire pitaraṁ ca tam /50/

Lord Ram was very happy with his brother Bharat and the latter's complete loyalty to him. Lord Ram accepted the crown and the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya¹.

After becoming a king, Lord Ram treated all the citizens as a caring father would treat his children. The citizens too reciprocated the Lord's love for them by treating the Lord as their guardian and parent². The citizens carried on with their duties in accordance to established traditions, never violating rules of Dharma and obeying the laws of Varna and Ashram to which they belonged³.

[Note--¹Lord Ram noted with great satisfaction and gratitude that Bharat had been very faithful to him during the fourteen years of his forest sojourn for he did not grab the crown, directly or indirectly, in the Lord's long absence, which was a remarkable instance of devotion, commitment and loyalty, as well as strict adherence to the standard norms of righteousness, probity, propriety and good conduct on the part of Bharat. Had Bharat wanted, it would have been very easy and convenient for him to usurp the throne of the kingdom on one or the other pretext, but he resolved to exercise exemplary self-restraint and did not do anything that went against the principles of Dharma.

The idea in this verse is that if Lord Ram had felt that Bharat had even some fraction of a desire to become a king, then the Lord would have cheerfully back-stepped and allowed Bharat to fulfil his wish to become a king. But, when Lord Ram found that there is no such hidden desire in Bharat's heart, he felt a sense of gratitude for Bharat. Bharat's exemplary conduct and fellowship of Dharma endeared him to Lord Ram.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43; (iii) Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede it.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 20-to Doha no. 21.

The idea is that the people were trained according to the duties they would perform in life, called their occupational duties. This way, the society worked smoothly without friction and unwarranted tensions. For instance, Brahmins observed their duties as the teaching class, as guides, advisors and moral preceptors. Kshatriyas had the duty to protect the society from external threats, look after administrative issues and generally maintain law and order. Vaishayas had the duty to provide all necessity of life, and carry out commercial activities that led to wealth generation. And finally, the Shudras had the function of serving others so that they are freed from worry of attending to daily chores and instead focus their attention on the functions and duties that they were expected to carry on.

Similarly, the life of a person was divided roughly in four parts as follows-- The first was when he would acquire knowledge and skill to become a productive member of the society, and to enable to focus his energy on studies and acquisition of skills he was expected to remain a bachelor (i.e. Brahmcharya ashram). In the second part of life when he became an adult, he married and entered the duty or profession in which he was trained or proficient (i.e. the Grihastha ashram). The third phase was when he 'passed on the baton' to the next generation, taking the role of a guide and advisor to youngsters (i.e. the Vanprastha ashram). And the last phase was when an elderly person would detach himself completely from worldly affairs and spend time in spiritual pursuits to prepare for his exit from this world (i.e. the Sanyas ashram).]

Verse no. 51:

त्रेतायां वर्तमानायां कालः कृतसमोऽभवत् ।

रामे राजनि धर्मज्ञे सर्वभूतसुखावहे ॥ ५१ ॥

tretāyām vartamānāyām kālah kṛta-samo'bhavat /
rāme rājani dharmajñe sarva-bhūta-sukhāvahe /51/

Lord Ram ruled during the Treta Yuga (which is the second era of the four-era one cycle of birth and death of this mortal world). But his rule was so excellent and righteous, and all the conducts of the Lord himself as well as everyone else in his kingdom were strictly in accordance to principles of Dharma that the Treta Yuga resembled the Sata Yuga (the first of the four-era cycle when Dharma was the dominant factor in all aspects of life). As a result of this, everyone was happy, religious and contented (so much so that even mother Nature showered her bounties on the people of Ayodhya, and the Lord's reign turned the earth a virtual heaven on earth)¹.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4

that precedes Doha no. 25; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26-to Doha no. 31.

The word 'Dharma' has a wide connotation. Briefly, it covers the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct and thought, goodness in all spheres of life, following of religious practices as well as rules of law, and so on and so forth. Hence, the reign of Lord Ram was marked by peace and prosperity, happiness and contentedness, with everyone doing his assigned duty and adhering to the laws of Dharma that pertained to the class of society to which a person belonged. There was no dearth of anything; mother Nature blessed the land with bountiful of rain and harvest; both fauna and flora flourished during the exemplary rule of Lord Ram when there was no strife and bitterness anywhere.

The glory of Lord Ram's reign is further narrated in the verses that follow herein below.]

Verse no. 52:

**वनानि नद्यो गिरयो वर्षाणि द्वीपसिन्धवः ।
सर्वे कामदुघा आसन् प्रजानां भरतर्षभ ॥ ५२ ॥**

vanāni nadyo girayo varṣāṇi dvīpa-sindhavaḥ /
sarve kāmā-dughā āsan prajānāṁ bharatarṣabha /52/

{Sage Shukdeo said to king Parikshit--} "Oh the exalted king in the race of the ancient king Bharat (bharatarṣabha)! During the excellent reign of Lord Ram, all aspects of mother Nature and her creation, such as the forests, the rivers, the hills and the mountains, the land, the seven seas and their islands, et al--every unit of creation was favourable; all of them provided all the necessities of life for all living beings. {There was no shortage of anything; abundance and richness of everything were normal aspects of life. The earth had transformed itself into heaven.}

Verse no. 53:

**नाधिव्याधिजराग्लानिदुःखशोकभयक्लमाः ।
मृत्युश्चानिच्छतां नासीद् रामे राजन्यधोक्षजे ॥ ५३ ॥**

nādhi-vyādhi-jarā-glāni-duḥkha-śoka-bhaya-klamāḥ /
mr̥tyuś cānicchatāṁ nāsīd rāme rājanya-dhokṣaje /53/

When Lord Ram, a personified form of the Supreme Being, ruled as king of this world, there was complete absence of bodily and mental sufferings, diseases, old age, bereavement, lamentation and grief, distress, fear and fatigue of any kind. Everyone was healthy, and fear of death and disease was unknown. Death came only when one reached ripe old age, and it was painless and comfortable; no one died a premature death.

Verse no. 54:

एकपत्नीव्रतधरो राजर्षिचरितः शुचिः ।
स्वधर्मं गृहमेधीयं शिक्षयन् स्वयमाचरत् ॥ ५४ ॥

eka-patnī-vrata-dharo rājarsi-caritaḥ śuciḥ /
sva-dharmaṁ gr̥ha-medhīyaṁ śikṣayan svayam ācarat /54/

Lord Ram took a vow of having only one wife (Sita), and he had no liaison with any other woman. In fact, he was a pious and saintly king. His character was taintless and exemplary. He had no negativities such as anger, malice or jealousy. He taught his subjects principles of good conduct, especially those related to the ashram and varnas of society to which a person belonged¹, and led by his own example. {Lord Ram, in fact, led a life that can certainly be classified as the 'life of a perfect human being'.}

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 50 herein above.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 20-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 21; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43-to Doha no. 47.]

Verse no. 55:

प्रेम्णानुवृत्त्या शीलेन प्रश्रयावनता सती ।
भिया ह्रिया च भावजा भर्तुः सीताहरन्मनः ॥ ५५ ॥

preṃṇānuvṛtṭyā śīlena praśrayāvanatā satī /
bhiyā hriyā ca bhāvajā bhartuḥ sītāharan manaḥ /55/

Sita herself led an exemplary life that set an example for others. She was very polite, submissive, faithful, loyal, chaste, loving, compassionate and understanding. She always followed the wish of her husband Lord Ram. Thus, by her noble character and loyalty to Lord Ram, she had endeared herself to him¹.

[Note--¹Lord Ram was an ideal husband, and Sita was an ideal wife. If the king and queen of a kingdom lead a good life, they set an example to their subjects to follow. Hence, every householder in Ayodhya followed their example and led a good life strictly in accordance with the laws of Dharma.]

Thus ends Canto 9, Chapter 10 of Srimad Bhagavat.

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(B) Canto (Skandha) 9, Chapter (Adhyaaya) 11:

This canto no. 9, chapter no. 11 of Srimad Bhagwat briefly describes the rule of Lord Ram after he returned from the forest. During his lifetime, the Lord performed many Yagnas (religious sacrifices) during which he liberally gave donations to Brahmins to the extent that he gifted large tracts of land in his kingdom to them and kept for himself only a fraction of his vast empire. But the Brahmins of that age were not greedy, for they returned everything to the Lord and requested him to accept the land

back from them, saying that the very gesture of the Lord was enough to please them, and they were not entitled to act as rulers of kingdoms, for their primary duty was to act as moral guides, advisors, preceptors, teachers, and restrict themselves to performance of religious activities.

In the second part of this chapter we read that Lord Ram heard malicious gossip casting aspersions on his own character and being righteous as well as the integrity and chastity of Sita because even though she was held captive by Ravana for a long time, the Lord accepted her. In order to stop this kind of mischievous, nonsensical and slanderous gossip which would erode the Lord's own integrity and honour in the eyes of his kingdom's subjects, Lord Ram decided, with a heavy heart, to distance himself from Sita. So, though she was immaculate and beyond taint, he sent her to the hermitage of sage Valmiki. At that time Sita was pregnant with the Lord's two sons who were later born in the sage's hermitage. Their names were Lava and Kush.

On his part, Lord Ram became completely detached from the affairs of this material world, living a forlorn life and doing his duties almost mechanically.

Lord Ram's three brothers had two sons each. The Lord sent his brothers on campaigns to rein-in wayward kings and demi-gods, such as Ghandharvas, who were not observing the laws of Dharma.

Then we read briefly about the prosperity and beauty of Ayodhya. Finally, at the end of his time on earth, Lord Ram, the personified form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, went back to his abode in the heaven where he was re-united with Sita. When the citizens of Ayodhya found out that the Lord has left them to ascend to heaven, they too followed him.

Now, let us commence with our reading of the text of this chapter.

Verse no. 1:

श्रीशुक उवाच

भगवानात्मनात्मानं राम उत्तमकल्पकैः ।

सर्वदेवमयं देवमीजेऽथाचार्यवान् मखैः ॥ १ ॥

śrī-śuka uvāca

bhagavān ātmanātmānaṁ rāma uttama-kalpakaiḥ /

sarva-devamayam devam ije 'thācāryavān makhaiḥ /1/

Sage Shukdeo continued with his narration: "After ascending the throne of Ayodhya, Lord Ram performed elaborate religious sacrifices¹ by appointing head priests to preside over the rituals. {These priests were called Acharya--pronounced 'ācārya' .}

Since the Lord was the Supreme Being himself in a human form, and all religious sacrifices are performed to worship the Supreme Lord, it follows that through these religious activities, Lord Ram actually worshipped himself, albeit indirectly.

[Note--¹This sacrifice was known as the Aswamedha Yagya, or the horse sacrifice. After performance of rituals, a horse was released to go anywhere it wished, and it was accompanied by an army to protect it. This sacrifice was done by great kings and emperors. All territory through which this horse travelled was considered conquered

by the patron king or emperor who did this sacrifice. Should any ruler hold the horse, then he was challenged for a battle. If this ruler won, the sacrifice was deemed to have failed and defiled; otherwise this ruler was forced to pay tribute to the emperor and promise to accept him as his superior. All great kings did this kind of horse sacrifice after ascending the throne of their respective kingdoms to assert their authority over an extended realm.]

Verse no. 2:

होत्रेऽददाद् दिशं प्राचीं ब्रह्मणे दक्षिणां प्रभुः ।
अध्वर्यवे प्रतीचीं वा उत्तरां सामगाय सः ॥ २ ॥

hotre'dadād diśam prācīm brahmaṇe dakṣiṇām prabhuḥ /
adhvaryave pratīcīm vā uttarām sāmagāya saḥ /2/

During these sacrifices, Lord Ram gave the eastern part of his kingdom to the Hota priest as donation. {The 'Hota' priest offers oblations to the sacred fire during the sacrifice. He recites the verses from the Rig Veda, and invokes the deities during the rituals.}

Similarly, Lord Ram donated the southern realm to the Brahma priest. {The 'Brahma' priest acts as a supervisor during the sacrifice and is responsible for whatever is done in the sacrificial arena.}

The Lord gave the western part of his kingdom as charity to the Adhvaryu priest. {The 'Adhvaryu' priest is primary responsible for the physical execution of the rituals, the doer of the rituals. This includes measuring the ground, building the altar, preparing sacrificial vessels, fetching wood and water, lighting the fire, etc. He recited verses from the Yajur Veda.}

Finally, the Udgata priest was donated the northern part of the kingdom. {The 'Udgata' priest sings verses from the Sam Veda. He is called the 'samvedic priest'.}

In this way, Lord Ram donated large chunks of his kingdom to these priests.

Verse no. 3:

आचार्याय ददौ शेषां यावती भूस्तदन्तरा ।
मन्यमान इदं कृत्स्नं ब्राह्मणोऽर्हति निःस्पृहः ॥ ३ ॥

ācāryāya dadau śeṣām yāvatī bhūs tad-antarā /
manyamāna idaṁ kṛtsnaṁ brāhmaṇo'rhati niḥsprṛhaḥ /3/

Lastly, Lord Ram, confident that the Brahmin priests have no material desire (and was sure that they would return this largesse to him), gave the residual part of the land between the east, west, north and south to the Acharya, the priest who presided over the rituals. {The 'Acharya' priest is more or less like a chairman during the course of the conduct of the ritual of the sacrifice. He is at the head of the entire process. All rituals are done under his guidance, and he sits close to the chief patron, in this case Lord Ram. While other priests as mentioned in the previous verse have specific

duties, the Acharya oversees all of them, and they act in consultation with him. The chief patron acts as the Acharya advises him to do. Though it is not mentioned here, sage Vashistha was the 'Acharya' of Ayodhya, and so in all probability he was the Acharya during the sacrifices also.}

Verse no. 4:

इत्ययं तदलङ्कारवासोभ्यामवशेषितः ।

तथा राज्यपि वैदेही सौमङ्गल्यावशेषिता ॥ ४ ॥

ity ayam tad-alankāra-vāsobhyām avaśeṣitaḥ /
tathā rājñy api vaidehī saumaṅgalyāvaśeṣitā /4/

After giving everything in charity to the Brahmins, Lord Ram retained only the basic necessities of life, such as his personal garments and royal ornaments. Similarly, Sita (Vaidehi, the daughter of king Janak) retained only her nose ring and simple clothes, and nothing else.

Verse no. 5:

ते तु ब्राह्मणदेवस्य वात्सल्यं वीक्ष्य संस्तुतम् ।

प्रीताः क्लिन्नधियस्तस्मै प्रत्यर्प्येदं बभ्राषिरे ॥ ५ ॥

te tu brāhmaṇa-devasya vātsalyam vīkṣya saṁstutam /
prītāḥ klinna-dhiyas tasmai pratyarpyedaṁ babhāṣire /5/

All the elderly Brahmins, who were engaged in the various activities related to the performance of the sacrifice by Lord Ram, were very pleased with him. The Lord was always very much inclined to show reverence and honour to the Brahmins and obey them.

The Brahmins felt very glad to have such a gracious, magnanimous and charitable Lord as their patron, and therefore, as a reciprocal measure, these Brahmins, who had never yearned for worldly treasures¹, decided to return all the largesse that the Lord had given to them by way of charity and donation (i.e. huge land parcels in different parts of his kingdom as narrated in verse no. 2 herein above).

The grateful Brahmins thus said to Lord Ram as follows--

[Note--¹In a general way, the Brahmins are supposed to be advisors, guides and teachers to the society, acting selflessly and in a judicious and righteous manner. They should never eye worldly treasures at the cost of austerity and simplicity of life. Their main role is acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, overseeing religious activities, ensuring that the society works in accordance with the laws of Dharma, and that law and order is maintained in the world. Their duty also included reigning in wayward kings and their ministers if they found that the actions of the latter were against Dharma and causing suffering to the people. The basic qualifications of a good Brahmin are outlined in Srimad Bhagwat Gita in chapter 18, verse no. 42 which

says that "Brahmins must practice tranquillity, be peaceful by nature, exercise restraint and self-control, practice the virtues of austerity, purity, patience, integrity, honesty, wisdom, knowledge, righteousness and adherence to Dharma."

A Brahmin is not supposed to act as a ruler or a landlord. Hence, in keeping with these well-established and respected traditions which ensured that the Brahmin was given respect by all in a society, the Brahmins who participated in the sacrifice of Lord Ram decided to return all the land parcels that the Lord had given them back to him.

Another reason why the Brahmins decided to return the land to Lord Ram was they knew that the Lord was an exemplary king and a perfect human being who had all the excellent qualities and virtues required of an excellent ruler, and in whose hands both the kingdom and its citizens were safe, would prosper, and live a happy and contented life.]

Verse no. 6:

अप्रत्तं नस्त्वया किं नु भगवन् भुवनेश्वर ।
यन्नोऽन्तर्हृदयं विश्व तमो हंसि स्वरोचिषा ॥ ६ ॥

aprattam nas tvayā kiṁ nu bhagavan bhuvaneśvara /
yan no'ntar-hṛdayam viśya tamo haṁsi sva-rociṣā /6/

The Brahmins said to Lord Ram: "Oh Lord! You are the lord of the entire creation (since you are a manifested form of the Supreme Being). As such, what is there that you have not already given to us. {By your kind grace, we have all our needs fulfilled, lead a happy and contented life, never face any kind of shortages, and are shown respect by everyone. What else would a good and honourable person want? We are not greedy, and neither is it our duty to act as rulers. Hence, it will be wrong on our parts to accept land from you.}

By your magnanimous nature and charitable disposition, you have won our hearts. Your kindness and grace shine like a sun's bright sunlight which dispels all kinds of darkness in this world. This is the supreme gift that we have from you, and we want nothing else. Oh Lord! We do not yearn for material donation of any kind. {We are not merchants who would barter something for something else. We did not participate in your sacrifice to offer our service to you with an expectation of gifts and largesse. We did so to honour you and be a part of the religious activity that you were undertaking as part of your duty of being a king who follows Dharma. We just need your grace and kindness that would be enough for us, and you have given it to us in abundance. What more is there to get? Oh Lord! Under your rule, we already have sufficient land and wealth to live a comfortable life, and desiring more and more is nothing but greed, and would be utter ignorance on our part.}

Verse no. 7:

नमो ब्रह्मण्यदेवाय रामायाकुण्ठमेधसे ।
उत्तमश्लोकधुर्याय न्यस्तदण्डार्पिताङ्घ्रये ॥ ७ ॥

namo brahmaṇya-devāya rāmāyākunṭha-medhase /
uttamaśloka-dhuryāya nyasta-daṇḍārpitāṅghraye /7/

We wish to offer our obeisance to the Supreme Being known as Brahm whom you represent. You, in turn, yourself worship Brahmins as representatives of the Supreme Lord on earth. {To wit, we are both adorable and worthy of worship in our own rights, and hence are equal.}

Oh Lord! Your intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, equanimity, resilience and self-restraint are all legendary, making you the best human being in this world. Oh Lord! Your lotus-like august feet are worshipped even by great sages who themselves are so exalted, holy and pure that they are beyond the purview of punishment (because they never commit any sin that can be punished).

As such, let us offer our worship to you."

Verse no. 8:

कदाचिल्लोकजिज्ञासुर्गूढो रात्र्यामलक्षितः ।
चरन्वाचोऽशृणोद् रामो भार्यामुद्दिश्य कस्यचित् ॥ ८ ॥

kadācil loka-jijñāsurgūḍho rātryāmalakṣitaḥ /
caranvāco'śṛṇod rāmo bhāryāmuddīśya kasyacit /8/

Sage Shukdeo continued: "Once, Lord Ram decided to go out in the night incognito to ascertain the ground realities of what is happening in real life in his capital, and to ascertain how the citizens treat him and what opinion they have of him.

During this secret sojourn in the night, the Lord heard a man speaking unfavourably about his wife Sita while showing annoyance with his own wife whom that man accused of being unchaste and of loose character.

Verse no. 9:

नाहं बिभर्मि त्वां दुष्टामसतीं परवेशमगाम् ।
स्त्रैणो हि बिभृयात् सीतां रामो नाहं भजे पुनः ॥ ९ ॥

nāhaṁ bibharmi tvāṁ duṣṭām asatīm para-veśma-gām /
straiṇo hi bibhryāt sītām rāmo nāhaṁ bhaje punaḥ /9/

{The man scolded his wife and accused her of infidelity, lack of character, and being unchaste and impure. As Lord Ram listened, the man told his wife--} "Look, you go to another man's house, thereby openly polluting yourself and undermining your chastity. Therefore, I cannot maintain you as my wife any more.

[Speaking to his unchaste wife, the man said--] "You go to another man's house, and therefore you are unchaste and polluted. I shall not maintain you any more. A man infatuated with a woman may keep her as his wife under the present circumstances as

Lord Ram had accepted Sita as his wife though knowing fully well that she lived unprotected in somebody else's place for a long time. {This man was referring to Sita living in Lanka under Ravana's captivity.}

But I am not like him (Lord Ram) who would accept a woman in this situation. So therefore, I am leaving you as my wife from today."

Verse no. 10:

इति लोकाद् बहुमुखाद् दुराराध्यादसंविदः ।

पत्या भीतेन सा त्यक्ता प्राप्ता प्राचेतसाश्रमम् ॥ १० ॥

iti lokād bahu-mukhād durārādhyaḍ asanvidah /
patyā bhītena sā tyaktā prāptā prācetasāśramam /10/

Sage Shukdeo said: "Persons lacking depth of truthful knowledge, and trying to be unduly pretentious about being righteous and upright, more often than not speak nonsensical things as this man had spoken.

Hearing this scandalous and malicious accusation casting aspersions on his own as well as Sita's untainted character by none other than one of his own citizens, Lord Ram was stunned, numbed and flabbergasted. Pondering over the matter he thought that if he did not take remedial steps immediately, then this gossip would spread like a slow poison throughout his kingdom, thereby ruining his reputation and demeaning him in the eyes of his subjects.

Fearing similar mischievous rascals and malicious gossip mongers, and with no choice left, the Lord decided to come out clean voluntarily by living apart from Sita. To make his act look transparent and to pre-empt any further mischief, he decided to take a harsh decision with a lead-like heavy heart by sending Sita, who was pregnant at that time, to the forest to live under the care and protection of the famous sage Valmiki.

[Note--Sita's two sons Lava and Kush were born in the hermitage of sage Valmiki -- see next verse no. 11 herein below. The kind sage treated Sita like his daughter, with all the affection and love that a father reserves for his favourite daughter.

Meanwhile, 'why did Lord Ram take this decision' is a question worth pondering about. The Lord had many thoughts churning through his mind. There was a possibility of more people saying such nasty things in private. If this mischief spreads, then not only would his reputation be ruined but also it would send a wrong signal down the length and breadth of the country, as then people would have no qualms in accepting unchaste women as their wives, or woman feeling free to live with anyone they fancy. This would violate the basic principle of Dharma related to the righteous way of a householder's life which states that a person should have only one wife, and no lady of honour should live with a man who is not her husband.

If this is allowed to happen, the basic fabric of a peaceful and orderly marital life would be torn apart, and the society would become promiscuous and unravel in complete disarray. And the people would blame Lord Ram for it, saying if the king can keep a wife who had lived with someone else for long, then why can't they keep a woman with a loose character?]

Verse no. 11:

अन्तर्वत्न्यागते काले यमौ सा सुषुवे सुतौ ।
कुशो लव इति ख्यातौ तयोश्चक्रे क्रिया मुनिः ॥ ११ ॥

antarvatny āgate kāle yamau sā suṣuve sutau /
kuśo lava iti khyātau tayoś cakre kriyā muniḥ /11/

When the time came, Sita gave birth to her twin sons, the famed siblings named Lava and Kush. All rituals and ceremonies related to their birth were performed by sage Valmiki.

Verse no. 12:

अङ्गदश्चित्रकेतुश्च लक्ष्मणस्यात्मजौ स्मृतौ ।
तक्षः पुष्कल इत्यास्तां भरतस्य महीपते ॥ १२ ॥

aṅgadaś citraketuś ca lakṣmaṇasyātmajau smṛtau /
takṣaḥ puṣkala ity āstān bharatasya mahīpate /12/

{Sage Shukdeo continued--} "Oh great king (Parikshit--'mahīpate')! Lord Ram's brothers too had two sons each. Laxman had two sons named Angad and Chitraketu, and Bharat had two sons named Taksha and Pushkal.

Verse nos. 13-14:

सुबाहुः श्रुतसेनश्च शत्रुघ्नस्य बभूवतुः ।
गन्धर्वान् कोटिशो जघ्ने भरतो विजये दिशाम् ॥ १३ ॥
तदीयं धनमानीय सर्वं राज्ञे न्यवेदयत् ।
शत्रुघ्नश्च मधोः पुत्रं लवणं नाम राक्षसम् ।
हत्वा मधुवने चक्रे मथुरां नाम वै पुरीम् ॥ १४ ॥

subāhuḥ śrutasenaś ca śatrughnasya babhūvatuḥ /
gandharvān koṭiśo jaghne bharato vijaye diśām /13/
tadīyaṁ dhanam āñīya sarvaṁ rājñe nyavedayat /
śatrughnaś ca madhoḥ putraṁ lavaṇaṁ nāma rākṣasam /
hatvā madhuvane cakre mathurāṁ nāma vai purīm /14/

Similarly, Shatrughan had two sons named Subahu and Shrutasen.

Keeping in line with the tradition of great emperors and kings, Lord Ram sent his brother Bharat on a campaign of conquest of all the directions. During this campaign, Bharat had to slay countless Gandharvas who were full of deceit and were

pretenders (as they said they had divine powers and a mandate to rule the world which was merely a false pretext to usurp power and wealth).

Like other conquerors in history, Bharat brought large amounts of wealth from his campaigns and offered it to Lord Ram.

Meanwhile, Shatrughan went on a campaign to eliminate other evil rulers who were descendants of the demon race. One such target of his campaign was a demon named Lavan (or Lavanasur--pronounced **Lavaṇasura**). He was the son of a demon named Madhu. This demon (Lavan) had established a great forest that he named 'Madhuvan' after his father Madhu. Shatrughan had killed Lavan in this great forest that was situated near the city of Mathura.

Verse no. 15:

**मुनौ निक्षिप्य तनयौ सीता भर्त्रा विवासिता ।
ध्यायन्ती रामचरणौ विवरं प्रविवेश ह ॥ १५ ॥**

munau nikṣipya tanayau sītā bhartrā vivāsītā /
dhyāyantī rāma-caraṇau vivaraṁ praviveśa ha /15/

Sita was so heartbroken and sad after she was abandoned by Lord Ram for no fault of hers that she did not want to live in this world any longer. So, after her two sons (Lava and Kush) were born and had attained a reasonable age of maturity, she entrusted their care in the hands of sage Valmiki, and while meditating on the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram, she took samadhi by entering the bowls of the earth.

[Note--Sita voluntarily entered a deep pit dug into the earth and ended her life by the yogic system of taking Samadhi--which simply means ending one's life voluntarily while meditating on the deity one worships. This sort of death is fearless and painless as it is done with full knowledge and without any coercion.]

Verse no. 16:

**तच्छ्रुत्वा भगवान् रामो रुन्धन्नपि धिया शुचः ।
स्मरंस्तस्या गुणास्तांस्तान्नाशकनोद् रोद्धुमीश्वरः ॥ १६ ॥**

tac chrutvā bhagavān rāmo rundhann api dhiyā śucaḥ /
smaraṁs tasyā guṇāṁs tāṁs tān nāśaknod roddhum īśvaraḥ /16/

When Lord Ram heard of Sita entering the bowls of the earth, he was completely devastated and shaken with immeasurable grief. Though he was dispassionate and remained detached from all kinds of worldly attachments, attractions, relations and connections, yet he gave great importance to someone who truly loved him, was devoted to him, and thought of no one else other than him, who in this case was Sita.

[Note--Lord Ram was numbed with sadness, dismay and grief. In distress, he could not say a word as he knew that the final days of his sojourn on this earth has finally

come. He could not comfort himself because it was he alone who was responsible for causing so intense suffering to Sita by sending her to forest exile inspite of being fully aware that she was immaculate, taintless, pure, loyal, honourable and chaste by all means. His regret did not give him any moment of reprieve from pain and lamentation of having done injustice to Sita merely to protect his own reputation, which he now thought in hindsight, could have been proved better by summoning that rascal in front of full court and asking him to prove that Sita was polluted. There were many traditional ways to do so, and one well-known one was the 'fire test' in which the accused is made to pass through burning fire. If the accused person is indeed uncorrupted then he or she emerges unscathed, otherwise the accused will be burnt alive.

It is a well-known fact also that Lord Ram had actually made Sita undergo this test in Lanka itself before accepting her as his wife--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108--to Doha no. 109. But the problem was that this 'fire test' was done in remote Lanka, far away from Ayodhya, and none of its citizens were witness to it, which lead to this piquant situation when wild allegations were levelled against both Lord Ram and Sita out of sheer ignorance. To be frank, it was 'Fate' and 'Kaal' that misled the Lord into deciding to send Sita to her second forest exile instead of telling her to repeat the fire test before the citizens of Ayodhya so as to settle the issue once and for all. But now it was too late for the Lord to make amends, and this thought kept haunting him like a ghost.]

Verse no. 17:

स्त्रीपुंप्रसङ्ग एतादृक्सर्वत्र त्रासमावहः ।

अपीश्वराणां किमुत ग्राम्यस्य गृहचेतसः ॥ १७ ॥

strī-puṁ-prasaṅga etādr̥k sarvatra trāsam-āvahaḥ /
apīśvarāṇāṁ kim uta grāmyasya gṛha-cetasah /17/

Indeed, though Lord Ram was an expert in spiritual and transcendental knowledge that relates to an existence beyond the gross mortal world and its transient relationships, yet he showed by his own example how a man falls into a trap if he, even for a moment, forgets who he really is and what his true identity is¹.

This worldly relationship that makes a man erroneously believe that he is someone's husband (or father) is the cause of pain and grief to him when some kind of discord or separation occurs. This irony exists amongst all ordinary human beings, except the exalted, wise and self-realised persons. Often times, even great gods like the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva fall in this trap, so there is no wonder that ordinary householders become an easy prey to this misconception, and as a consequence suffer grief and distress at events related to this materialistic world.

[Note--¹If a man forgets that he is not the 'body' but the 'soul' which is an entity that is pure consciousness and is beyond the grossness of this mortal and material world, then he would have no attachments with anything or anyone in this world. With this outlook, there is no reason why a man would feel so sad and forlorn at the loss of anything, even his own wife and family. He would consider himself as a traveller who

meets so many persons during his journey, even develop friendship with many of them, but at the end he leaves them all behind to return to his old home.]

Verse no. 18:

तत ऊर्ध्वं ब्रह्मचर्यं धार्यन्नजुहोत् प्रभुः ।
त्रयोदशाब्दसाहस्रमग्निहोत्रमखण्डितम् ॥ १८ ॥

stata ūrdhvaṁ brahmacaryaṁ dhāryann ajuhot prabhuḥ /
trayodaśābda-sāhasram agnihotram akhaṇḍitam /18/

After Sita entered the bowls of the earth, Lord Ram led the rest of his life observing celibacy and remaining totally detached from this material world, but continued to do his duties as a king in a normal way (without exhibiting any outward sign of his internal pain and sufferings due to separation from Sita).

During his reign, the Lord performed numerous Agnihotra sacrifices¹ for a continuous period of thirteen thousand years.

[Note--¹The 'Agnihotra sacrifice' is called the fire sacrifice. Earlier, Lord Ram had done a 'horse sacrifice' as narrated in verse no. 1 herein above.

During this sacrifice that is performed twice a day before sunset and after sunrise, clarified butter (ghee) and milk are offered to the sacred fire to invoke the 'energy of the Sun God' that the 'fire' represents. It is done to neutralise negative forces and ignite positive energy. As part of the rituals, verses from the Rig Veda are chanted.]

Verse no. 19:

स्मरतां हृदि विन्यस्य विद्धं दण्डककण्टकैः ।
स्वपादपल्लवं राम आत्मज्योतिरगात् ततः ॥ १९ ॥

smaratāṁ hṛdi vinyasya viddhaṁ daṇḍaka-kaṇṭakaiḥ /
sva-pāda-pallavaṁ rāma ātma-jyotir agāt tataḥ /19/

After having completed such fire sacrifices for thirteen thousand years, Lord Ram, whose lotus-like feet had been made sore by thorns that pierced them during his living in the dense dandakarnya forest, decided to leave this mortal world and return to his abode in the heaven. This primary abode of the Lord is called Vaikuntha, which is the abode of Lord Vishnu, and it shines with a celestial effulgence known as Brahm-joyti, an illumination that is many times more brilliant than the light of the sun¹.

Though the Lord physically exited from this world, but his devotees enshrine his lotus-like feet in their hearts and worship them.

[Note--¹Just like the brilliant light of the sun illuminates its surrounding space, the presence of Lord Vishnu illuminates the heaven with a brilliance called Brahm-joyti--i.e. an illumination that emanates from the Supreme Being and radiates out in all the directions.]

Verse no. 20:

नेदं यशो रघुपतेः सुरयाच्चयात्त-
लीलातनोरधिकसाम्यविमुक्तधाम्नः ।
रक्षोवधो जलधिबन्धनमस्त्रपूगेः
किं तस्य शत्रुहनने कपयः सहायाः ॥ २० ॥

nedarṁ yaśo raghupateḥ sura-yācñāyātta-
līlā-tanor adhika-sāmya-vimukta-dhāmaṇḥ /
rakṣo-vadho jaladhi-bandhanam astra-pūgaiḥ
kiṁ tasya śatru-hanane kapayaḥ sahāyāḥ /20/

Since Lord Ram was a human manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, his human-like deeds in this world which made him so famous, such as his slaying the demon king Ravana with a hail of arrows, or his getting a bridge constructed across the ocean to reach Lanka, or his taking the assistance of the humble monkeys to defeat the ferocious and powerful demon army of Lanka, only reflected a fraction of the Lord's actual cosmic glory, as these and other such worldly events presented a view of the Lord's glory that was limited to his playing the role of a human being, and did not reflect his role as the Lord of Creation. For the fact of the matter is that his real glory as the Supreme Lord of this creation transcends and goes much beyond such mundane and worldly considerations as killing some demon or constructing a physical structure such as a bridge. Lord Ram has no superior or equal, for he is comparable to no one else but himself!

Verse no. 21:

यस्यामलं नृपसदःसु यशोऽधुनापि
गायन्त्यघघ्नमृषयो दिगिभेन्द्रपट्टम् ।
तं नाकपालवसुपालकिरीटजुष्ट-
पादाम्बुजं रघुपतिं शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥ २१ ॥

yasyāmalaṁ nṛpa-sadaḥsu yaśo'dhunāpi
gāyanty agha-ghnam ṛṣayo dig-ibhendra-paṭṭam /
taṁ nākapāla-vasupāla-kirīṭa-juṣṭa-
pādāmbujaṁ raghupatiṁ śaraṇaṁ prapadye /21/

The glory of Lord Ram is spotless and famous. It vanquishes a devotee's sins and its consequences¹. His glorious name and deeds are celebrated in all the directions of the world. They are recounted by many great sages² such as Markandeya who had narrated the story of Lord Ram to king Yudhishthira³. Not only sages and saints, but even great gods such as Lord Shiva⁴ and the creator Brahma bow before Lord Ram, and recount the Lord's glory and sing his praises to obtain spiritual bliss. I (i.e. sage

Shukdeo) too bow my head before Lord Ram's holy feet and pay my obeisance to him.

[Note--¹Countless devotees of the Supreme Being find it easy and convenient to remember Lord Ram and sing his glories. This is because Lord Ram lived in this world in a physical form like any other human being, a form that one can easily identify and relate to, as compared to the cosmic and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being that is invisible, and which seems to be too abstract and beyond comprehension by an ordinary devotee.

²Many great sages have been recounting the glorious story of Lord Ram down the ages. For instance, Lord Shiva heard it from sage Kumbhaj (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 48); sage Bharadwaj heard it from sage Yagyavalkya, sage Kaagbhusund heard it from Lord Shiva (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30); sage Kaagbhusund narrated it to Garud, the celestial eagle who is Lord Vishnu's mount (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 62; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 64.

³Sage Markandeya narrating the story of Lord Ram to king Yudhisthira is described in the Mahabharat, Van Parva (also known as the Aranya Parva), Ramopakhyan, Chapter nos. 257-275.

⁴The entire story of the Ramayana was narrated by Lord Shiva to his consort Parvati, also known as Uma, as expressly mentioned in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 120-to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 121; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52.]

Verse no. 22:

**स यैः स्पृष्टोऽभिदृष्टो वा संविष्टोऽनुगतोऽपि वा ।
कोसलास्ते ययुः स्थानं यत्र गच्छन्ति योगिनः ॥ २२ ॥**

sa yaiḥ spr̥ṣṭo'bhidr̥ṣṭo vā samviṣṭo'nugato'pi vā /
kosalās te yayuḥ sthānaṁ yatra gacchanti yoginaḥ /22/

Lord Ram returned to his heavenly abode in the Vaikuntha. All devotees of the Lord too go to this heavenly abode of the Lord to join him in service¹ just like all the citizens of Ayodhya who had accompanied Lord Ram at the time of his departure from this earth to go back to heaven². These citizens were very fortunate as they had spent their lifetime serving Lord Ram, sharing their lives along with its joy and pain with him, living and enjoying all available amenities with him, and being loyal, devoted and honest to him. Hence, all the inhabitants of Ayodhya had qualified themselves to ascend to the heaven along with Lord Ram.

[Note--¹In Srimad Bhagwat, Chapter 4, verse no. 9, Lord Krishna tells Arjun: "Oh Arjun! Those who know my transcendental nature and realise that my physical form

of a human being is not my true form, and worship me with this understanding, such persons, upon leaving their mortal bodies (i.e. upon their death) attain my eternal abode and they do not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death in this mortal world."

²We read in Veda Vyas' epic narration of the Ramayana, known as the 'Adhyatma Ramayan', that when Lord Ram left Ayodhya, every person, old and young, male and female--everyone accompanied the Lord on his final journey to heaven from this mortal world. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9.]

Verse no. 23:

पुरुषो रामचरितं श्रवणैरुपधारयन् ।
आनुशंस्यपरो राजन् कर्मबन्धैर्विमुच्यते ॥ २३ ॥

puruṣo rāma-caritaṁ śravaṇair upadhārayan /
ānūśaṁsya-paro rājan karma-bandhair vimucyate /23/

Sage Shukdeo said to Parikshit: "Oh king (rājan)! Those who listen to this glorious story of the life and times of Lord Ram, universally known as the Ramayana, shall find freedom from all worldly attachments and negative influences arising from misconceptions related to one's body and one's true identity, thereby finding liberation from their consequences (that bind a person to this mortal world of transmigration)."

[Note--A devotee would come to understand that the deeds done by his gross mortal body does not reflect the wishes of his soul which is distinct from this gross body, and is pure consciousness instead. With this attitude and understanding, all causes of jealousy and envy would come to an end. A devotee would then lead a dispassionate life marked by equanimity, forbearance and patience. This virtue, in its turn, frees him from the bondage of attachments and involvement in this mortal world, and help him attain eternal peace and tranquillity.]

Verse no. 24:

श्रीराजोवाच
कथं स भगवान् रामो भ्रातृन् वा स्वयमात्मनः ।
तस्मिन् वा तेऽन्ववर्तन्त प्रजाः पौराश्च ईश्वरे ॥ २४ ॥

śrī-rājavāca:
katham sa bhagavān rāmo bhrātṛn vā svayam ātmanah /
tasmin vā te'nvavartanta prajāḥ paurāś ca īśvare /24/

King Parikshit said (to sage Shukdeo): "Oh revered sage! Please enlighten me more about Lord Ram--how did he conduct himself, how did he treat his brothers and citizens, how did they treat him in return, and many such related things."

Verse no. 25:

श्रीबादरायणिरुवाच

अथादिशद् दिग्विजये भ्रातृस्त्रिभुवनेश्वरः ।

आत्मानं दर्शयन् स्वानां पुरीमैक्षत सानुगः ॥ २५ ॥

śrī-bādarāyaṇir-uvāca:

athādiśad dig-vijaye bhrātṛṁs tri-bhuvaneśvaraḥ /

ātmānaṁ darśayan svānāṁ purīm aikṣata sānugaḥ /25/

Sage Shukdeo (also known as śrī-bādarāyaṇ) replied: "After returning from his forest sojourn, and upon the request of his younger brother Bharat (who had been governing Ayodhya during Lord Ram's absence), the Lord ascended the throne as the king of Ayodhya.

After becoming king, Lord Ram ordered his brothers to go in different directions to lead campaigns of conquest and reinforcing his authority in various directions of his extensive domain¹. Meanwhile, he himself remained in Ayodhya to attend to the daily requirements of governance of the kingdom and attend to the needs of his citizens. In carrying out his duties, the Lord was assisted by his ministers and councillors.

[Note--¹Refer to verse nos. 13-14 herein above. These campaigns were necessary once in a while to establish and reassert the authority of the emperor over his vast empire, for otherwise smaller kings and rulers would become bold enough over time to refuse to accept the emperor as their sovereign. These campaign were not meant merely to conquer land, but were primarily meant to keep a firm hold on maintaining law and order and control over vast territory already under the empire.]

{The following verse nos. 26-27 describe the grandeur, the elegance and the beauty of the city of Ayodhya under the reign of Lord Ram.}

Verse no. 26:

आसिक्तमार्गा गन्धोदैः करिणां मदशीकरैः ।

स्वामिनं प्राप्तमालोक्य मत्तां वा सुतरामिव ॥ २६ ॥

āsikta-mārgāṁ gandhodaiḥ kariṇāṁ mada-śīkaraiḥ /

svāmināṁ prāptam ālokya mattāṁ vā sutarām iva /26/

During the reign of Lord Ram, the streets of Ayodhya, the capital city of the kingdom bearing the same name, were washed and sprinkled daily with scented water and perfume that were sprayed by elephants using their trunks. When the citizens observed that Lord Ram personally supervised cleaning and upkeep of their city, they were mightily pleased with their king, Lord Ram, appreciating his efforts and heartily thanking him for it. These endeavours of the Lord made Ayodhya an opulent city.

Verse no. 27:

प्रासादगोपुरसभाचैत्यदेवगृहादिषु ।
विन्यस्तहेमकलशैः पताकाभिश्च मण्डिताम् ॥ २७ ॥

prāsāda-gopura-sabhā-caitya-deva-grhādiṣu /
vinyasta-hema-kalaśaiḥ patākābhiś ca maṇḍitām /27/

All the buildings, including the palaces and residences of ordinary citizens, along with their gates, as well as assembly houses, public platforms, temples, and all such common places were decorated with golden water-pots and bedecked with various types of colourful flags and festoons.

Verse no. 28:

पूगैः सवृन्तै रम्भाभिः पट्टिकाभिः सुवाससाम् ।
आदर्शैरंशुकैः सग्भिः कृतकौतुकतोरणाम् ॥ २८ ॥

pūgaiḥ savṛntai rambhābhiḥ paṭṭikābhiḥ suvāsasām /
ādarśair aṁśukaiḥ sragbhiḥ kṛta-kautuka-toraṇām /28/

Wherever Lord Ram went and whichever place he visited, ornamental welcome-gates were constructed in his honour. These gates were decorated with auspicious paraphernalia such as trees of banana and betel nut, as well as different kinds of fresh flowers and fruits. To add colour and decor to these gates, many kinds of colourful flags, banners, festoons, garlands and mirrors were hung from them.

[Note--As part of his royal duties, Lord Ram used to visit different parts of his kingdom. Whenever he went anywhere, gates were erected to welcome him. These gates were artfully decked up and presented a picture of all round prosperity and opulence of the place visited by Lord Ram.]

Verse no. 29:

तमुपेयुस्तत्र तत्र पौरा अर्हणपाणयः ।
आशिषो युयुजुर्देव पाहीमां प्राक्त्वयोद्धृताम् ॥ २९ ॥

tam upeyus tatra tatra paurā arhaṇa-pāṇayaḥ /
āśiṣo yuyujur deva pāhīmāṁ prāk tvayoddhṛtām /29/

Wherever Lord Ram went, people came out in large numbers to welcome him. They carried with them auspicious paraphernalia to welcome and worship the Lord and seek his blessings and benediction. They would collectively say: "Oh Lord! Just as

you had earlier rescued the people and saved them from the horrors of the demons, we request you to grant us the same protection. Oh Lord! We bow before you to pray that you grant us your blessings and shower your benevolence upon us."

Verse no. 30:

ततः प्रजा वीक्ष्य पतिं चिरागतं दिदृक्षयोत्सृष्टगृहाः स्त्रियो नराः ।
आरुह्य हर्म्याण्यरविन्दलोचनमतृप्तनेत्राः कुसुमैरवाकिरन् ॥ ३० ॥

tataḥ prajā vīkṣya patiṁ cirāgataṁ didṛkṣayotsrṣṭa-grhāḥ striyo narāḥ /
āruhya harmyāṇy aravinda-lochanam atṛpta-netrāḥ kusumair avākiran /30/

When Lord Ram went out on such long visits to the far-flung areas of his kingdom and remained absent from Ayodhya, the citizens of the city would become uneasy. They would be eager to see him again. So they would frequently go on their roof-tops to peer expectantly into the distant horizon to see if there was any sign of the Lord returning home. And finally, when the Lord did return home to Ayodhya, the cheerful citizens would shower flowers upon him from their balconies and roof-tops as well as line the streets to applaud him and warmly welcome him home from his trip to distant places of his realm.

{The following verse nos. 31-34 describe the opulence, splendour and grandeur of the royal palace of Lord Ram.}

Verse nos. 31-34:

अथ प्रविष्टः स्वगृहं जुष्टं स्वैः पूर्वराजभिः ।
अनन्ताखिलकोषाढ्यमनर्घ्योरुपरिच्छदम् ॥ ३१ ॥
विद्रुमोदुम्बरद्वारैर्वैदूर्यस्तम्भपङ्क्तिभिः ।
स्थलैर्मारकतैः स्वच्छैर्भाजत्स्फटिकभित्तिभिः ॥ ३२ ॥
चित्रस्रग्भिः पट्टिकाभिर्वासोमणिगणांशुकैः ।
मुक्ताफलैश्चिदुल्लासैः कान्तकामोपपत्तिभिः ॥ ३३ ॥
धूपदीपैः सुरभिर्भिर्मण्डितं पुष्पमण्डनैः ।
स्त्रीपुम्भिः सुरसङ्काशैर्जुष्टं भूषणभूषणैः ॥ ३४ ॥

atha praviṣṭaḥ sva-grhaṁ juṣṭaṁ svaiḥ pūrva-rājabhiḥ /
anantākhila-koṣāḍhyam anarghyoruparicchadam /31/
vidrumodumbara-dvārain vaidūrya-stambha-paṅktibhiḥ /
sthalair mārakataiḥ svacchair bhrājat-sphaṭika-bhittibhiḥ /32/
citra-sragbhiḥ paṭṭikābhir vāso-maṇi-gaṇāmśukaiḥ /
muktā-phalaiś cid-ullāsaiḥ kānta-kāmopapattibhiḥ /33/
dhūpa-dīpaiḥ surabhibhir maṇḍitaṁ puṣpa-maṇḍanaiḥ /
strī-pumbhiḥ sura-saṅkāśair juṣṭaṁ bhūṣaṇa-bhūṣaṇaiḥ /34/

After returning home to Ayodhya from his tours to the distant parts of his realm, Lord Ram would enter his royal palace which had been the residence of his ancestors for ages. Within the palace, there were various kinds of priceless treasures and rich wardrobes full of colourful collection of royal garments and ceremonial robes.

By the two sides of each of the entrance doors and gates were seats made of coral. The courtyards had pillars made of Vaidurya Mani (a kind of gem commonly called a 'cat's eye'). The floors were paved with highly polished Markata Mani (i.e. the emerald gemstone; it is also called 'Panna'). The foundations of these pillars and the floor itself were made of fine marble stone.

The entire palace was elegantly decked up with garlands, flowers and festoons to which were added valuable gem-stones that glittered with a brilliant radiance. To add opulence and grandeur to the palace, it was also decorated with priceless pearls, and lamps with scented oil burnt everywhere to light up the interiors of the palace.

The attendants and servants of the palace had charming demeanours, and with their rich clothes, ornaments and other kinds of royal decorations they resembled demi-gods who walk the corridors of heaven.

Verse no. 35:

तस्मिन्स भगवान् रामः स्निग्धया प्रिययेष्टया ।

रेमे स्वारामधीराणामृषभः सीतया किल ॥ ३५ ॥

tasmin sa bhagavān rāmaḥ snigdhayā priyayeṣṭayā /
reme svārāma-dhīrāṇām ṛṣabhaḥ sītayā kila /35/

Lord Ram, who was the Lord of this creation (because he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord), lived happily in that palace with Sita¹ who served him well and always ensured that the Lord was kept contented and happy.

[Note--¹Let there be no confusion regarding the mention of Sita in this verse. It must be remembered that this part of the narration relates to the inquiry of Parikshit regarding the routine of Lord Ram's normal life in Ayodhya--refer: verse no. 24. Obviously then, sage Shukdeo is narrating here what Lord Ram used to do during the course of his daily life in Ayodhya, and how he conducted his duties as the king of Ayodhya by going to visit distant parts of his kingdom to see things for himself.

Hence, the narration in verse nos. 25-35 is the answer of Shukdeo. It clearly relates to that period of time when Lord Ram lived in Ayodhya with Sita, and not of the period after Sita was sent by him to sage Valmiki's hermitage.]

Verse no. 36:

बुभुजे च यथाकालं कामान् धर्ममपीडयन् ।

वर्षपूगान् बहून् नृणामभिध्याताङ्घ्रिपल्लवः ॥ ३६ ॥

bubhuje ca yathā-kālaṁ kāmān dharmam apīḍayan /
varṣa-pūgān bahūn nṛṇām abhidhyātāṅghri-pallavaḥ /36/

Lord Ram, whose lotus-like feet are worshipped by his devotees, never violated the accepted rules and traditions of religious behaviour; he never went against the tenets of Dharma. He enjoyed worldly pleasures only to the extent allowed by the scriptures and the principles of Dharma for kings to enjoy.

{To wit, Lord Ram was never indulgent, and he never engrossed himself unnecessarily in worldly pleasures. Being a king, he could not, for practical reasons, live like a hermit or ascetic in his palace, as that would make him look ridiculous in the eyes of the world. So, externally he would make a show of enjoying kingly comforts, but internally he would remain aloof and detached.}"

Thus answered sage Shukdeo to king Parikshit regarding the conduct of Lord Ram after he ascended the throne of Ayodhya to become its king-emperor.

Hereby ends Canto 9, Chapter 11 of Srimad Bhagwat that describes the life and time of Lord Ram as the king-emperor of Ayodhya.

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PART A, Chapter 3:

Kalidas' classic 'Raghuvansham': Canto 10-15

The Classical Narration of the Immortal Story of the Ramayana

Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Chapter (Sarga) 10, verse nos. 1-86:

Introduction to Kalidas' Raghuvansham:

'Raghuvansham' is an epic poem written by Kalidas, a poet par-excellence and a Sanskrit scholar of medieval India, who is highly respected and universally regarded as the 'Shakespeare of India'. He was a Sanskrit scholar, a poet, a dramatist and a playwright, all rolled into one. His creative writings are unmatched in the annals of Sanskrit literature, and no single author has been able to match his abilities and stupendous creativity ever since his time.

The epic poetry known as 'Raghuvansham' has 19 Chapters in all. It is a detailed narrative of the dynasty of the Kings of the Solar Race in which Lord Ram was born. This poem called 'Raghuvansham', however, derives its name from king Raghu, who was the son of king Dilip, the first king of the immediate branch of the family tree in which Lord Ram was born. It goes on to narrate the life and time of all the 27 kings of this branch of the family which ended with its last king known as Agnivarna. It is like a historical narrative that describes in detail that is coloured and embellished by an expert poet's magnificent power of imagination and engaging narrative, the reign, the life and time, and the achievements as well as the failings of all the kings of the race descending from king Dilip and his son king Raghu. This lineage is also known as the Solar Race, because it is believed to have originated from the Sun God.

Since the focus of our present narrative is on magnificent and revered story of the epic 'Ramayana', which is universally regarded as a holy book of the Hindus, as it describes the life and time of Lord Ram, who is highly respected and revered as a Divine Being, someone who was a human manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu, we shall restrict ourselves to Canto nos. 10-15 of 'Raghuvansham' as these Cantos are focused on this theme. However, to give a comprehensive dimension to our Book, we shall read the remaining part of Raghuvansham, i.e. Cantos 1-9, and 17-19 later on in Part 2 of this Book.

Summary of Raghuvansham, Canto 10, verse nos. 1-86:

King Dashrath (also spelled as Dashrath or Dashratha) of Ayodhya, the father of Lord Ram, had spent about ten-thousand years ruling his kingdom, yet he had no son. He was worried about his future, so he was advised by his court priest, sage Vashistha, to organise a son-begetting fire-sacrifice under the guidance of the renowned sage Sringeri Rishi. {The spelling of the king's name varies--viz. in Sanskrit texts it is Dashrath or Dashratha, while in Hindi texts such as Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, it is spelled as Dashrath.}

In the meantime, the demons had taken birth and their chief was Ravana and his three brothers, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan. Ravana had done severe penance to please the creator Brahma, and when the creator granted him boon of invincibility, unmatched power and victory over all the creatures, he became emboldened enough to run amok in this world. He unleashed a reign of terror and mayhem all around, not even sparing the gods.

Tormented and worried, the gods, along with mother earth who represented all creatures of this world, approached Lord Vishnu, the second of the Trinity Gods and the protector, sustainer and caretaker of this creation, to save them from Ravana's horrors. On their prayer, Lord Vishnu promised them that he would come down to earth in the form of a human being known as Lord Ram since it was not possible to kill Ravana in his role as a 'God' due to Brahma's boon of immunity to Ravana which said that the latter won't be killed by the gods. But Brahma had told Ravana at that time that this is a mortal world, and though he was being granted immunity from death at the hands of the mighty and the powerful, yet he must make certain exceptions so as to obey the laws of Nature and creation. On this condition laid by Brahma, Ravana thought that humans and monkeys would be no match against him if he becomes so powerful that even the gods fear him. So therefore, he told Brahma that if it is absolutely necessary to make some exception to the general immunity from death, then he would opt for human being and monkeys who could kill him in a battle if they ever can muster courage to face him and fight with him.

Hence, Lord Vishnu told the assembled gods and mother earth that he would exploit this loophole to slay Ravana in the form of a human being with the help of monkeys. The gods and mother earth were pleased, and they left feeling happy.

In the meantime, king Dashrath's (also spelled as Dashrath or Dashratha) fire-sacrifice was successful and the fire god emerged with a pot of a divine potion which he gave Dashrath to be distributed amongst his wives. The cheerful king gave half of this blessed potion to his eldest queen Kaushalya and the other half to the next queen Kaikeyi. These two queens then divided their own share into two equal halves, and then each gave this one half to their partner queen Sumitra. This method of distribution is endorsed in Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 10-12.

Thus, in due course of time, all the three queens gave birth to four lovely sons. Kaushalya gave birth to Lord Ram, Kaikeyi to Bharat, and Sumitra to the twins Laxman and Shatrughan.

At the time of their birth, the royal crown jewels over Ravana's head slipped and fell down to the earth to give an ominous warning to the demon king that his nemesis has taken birth.

All birth rituals and ceremonies were duly held with pomp and pageant. As time passed, the four brothers grew up and were sent to sage Vashistha for their education.

This part of this magnificent story has also been narrated in Tulsidas' epic version of the Ramayana that is known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 204.

With this background information, now let us commence with our reading of the main text of Raghuvansham's Canto 10 as follows:

{Note--The verses have been numbered in the following sequence: canto number followed by verse number. For instance, the first verse is numbered "10-1", meaning canto no. 10, verse no. 1. This pattern is followed throughout Raghuvansham.}

Verse no. 1:

**पृथिवीम् शासतस्तस्य पाकशासनतेजसः।
किञ्चिद्नमनूर्द्धः शरदामयुतम् ययौ॥ १०-१**

pr̥thivīm śāsatastasya pākaśāsanatejasaḥ ।
kimcidūnāmanūnārddeḥ śaradāmayutam yayau || 10-1

10-1. King Dashrath was a famous and powerful ruler of the kingdom of Ayodhya. He was equal to Indra, the king of gods of heaven, in grandeur, might, radiance and affluence. No less than ten thousand years passed by as he ruled this earth.

Verse no. 2:

**न चोपलेभे पूर्वेषामृणनिर्मोक्षसाधनम्।
सुताभिधानम् स ज्योतिः सद्यः शोक्तमोपहम्॥ १०-२**

na copalebhe pūrveṣāmṛṇanirmokṣasāadhanam ।
sutābhidhānam sa jyotiḥ sadyaḥ śokatamopaham || 10-2

10-2. It was so unfortunate that inspite of his glorious life and adherence to Dharma, he could not yet find that symbolic 'light' called a 'son' that would dispel his gloom of worries and sorrows pertaining to the future of his family, inheritance of the throne of the kingdom, and the means of obtaining freedom from the debt due to his ancestors.

[Note--King Dashrath remained childless even after ten thousand years of ruling this world. He was worried as to who would inherit his legacy and who would perform his last rites when he died. He had three chief queens, yet none could bear him a son. These thoughts made Dashrath very sad and worried. In Hinduism it is believed that a son is able to help his ancestors find freedom from the cycle of birth and death by performing certain rituals and making charities for this purpose. It is called 'Pitra Daan'.]

Verse no. 3:

**अतिष्ठत्प्रत्ययापेक्षसम्ततिः स चिरम् नृपः।
प्राङ्मन्थादनभिव्यक्तरत्नोत्पत्तिरिवार्णवः॥ १०-३**

atiṣṭhatpratyayāpekṣasamtatiḥ sa ciram nrpaḥ।
prāṅmanthādanabhivyaktaratnotpattirivārṇavaḥ || 10-3

10-3. Just as the precious gems of the ocean were not obtained by the gods in some ancient time until efforts were made by churning the ocean, so was also the case with king Dashrath. In his destiny it was indeed provided that he would have sons, but he had to make an effort for it; there was the need for an action that would produce a result in the way of him having sons.

[Note--If the ocean was not churned, it wouldn't have produced anything. Right effort has to be made to attain success in anything. Sons would not drop down from the sky without making some effort to have them. In ancient times, religious activity dominated all spheres of life. If one wished to have some wish fulfilled, he would consult his priest and perform some ritual so that the desired objective was obtained as a blessing. One such universally approved ritual was the performance of a fire-sacrifice. Dashrath finally did one to fulfil his wish to get sons as will be narrated herein below.]

Verse no. 4:

**ऋष्यशृङ्गादयस्तस्य सन्तः सन्तानकाङ्क्षिणः।
आरेभिरे जितात्मानः पुत्रीयामिष्टिमृत्विजः॥ १०-४**

rṣyaśṛṅgādayastasya santaḥ santānakāṅkṣiṇaḥ।
ārebhire jītātmānaḥ putriyāmiṣṭimṛtvijaḥ || 10-4

10-4. Then, great sages led by Sringi (who was an expert in this particular field) were summoned. They started the performance of a son-begetting fire-sacrifice (on behalf of their patron, king Dashrath).

[Note--Even in our modern age, a person would consult and engage some professional for helping him do certain work requiring expertise. In medical field too, there are many professional branches. In the present context, sage Sringi was an expert in performance of a fire-sacrifice that would produce a positive result to fulfil the

patron's desire to have an offspring. This fire-sacrifice was called 'putra-kaamesthi' yagya.]

Verse no. 5:

तस्मिन्नवसरे देवाः पौलस्त्योपप्लुता हरिम्।
अभिजग्मुर्निदाघार्ताश्छायावृक्षमिवाध्वगाः॥ १०-५

tasminnavasare devāḥ paulastyopaplutā harim।
abhijagmurnidāghārtāśchāyāvṛkṣamivādhvagāḥ || 10-5

10-5. Meanwhile, almost at the same point of time, the gods, who were immensely suffering from the horrors and oppression unleashed by the demon king Ravana, went to seek succour from Lord Vishnu in the same way as a harried traveller seeks the shelter of a tree when he is tormented by the scorching heat of the sun.

[Note--A harried traveller goes to take shelter under the cooling shade of a tree when the scorching sun makes him feel oppressed and restless. Similarly, the horrors of Ravana left the gods so terrified that they had no other option but to seek protection from Lord Vishnu who is the protector and caretaker of this creation, and is the second God of the Trinity.]

Verse no. 6:

ते च प्रापुरुदन्वन्तम् बुबुधे चादिपूरुषः।
अव्याक्षेपो भविष्यन्त्याः कार्यसिद्धेर्हि लक्षणम्॥ १०-६

te ca prāpurudanvantam bubudhe cādipūruṣaḥ।
avyākṣepo bhaviṣyantyaḥ kāryasiddherhi lakṣaṇam || 10-6

10-6. No sooner did the assembly of gods reached the celestial ocean of milk where Lord Vishnu was present, than the Lord woke up from his deep-sleep state of consciousness, called the 'Yoga Nidra'. This was an auspicious sign for the gods because if there is no delay or hindrance while getting started on a job, then its success is certain; it is a sign of accomplishment of the enterprise.

[Note--Lord Vishnu reclines on the coiled body of Seshnath, the legendary celestial serpent, as it floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk. The Yoga Nidra is the deep-sleep state of consciousness usually practiced by great ascetics. During this sleep, the ascetic remains oblivious of the surroundings while resting in blissful state of meditation. As soon as the gods arrived, Lord Vishnu opened his eyes. It is because the Lord is all-knowing, and he was quietly aware that he has gods as his guests.]

Verse no. 7:

भोगिभोगासनासीनम् ददृशुस्तम् दिवौकसः।
तत्फणामण्डलोदर्चिर्मणिद्योतितविग्रहम्॥ १०-७

bhogibhogāsanāsīnam dadṛśustam divaukaśaḥ।
tatphaṇāmaṇḍalodarcirmaṇidyotitavigrahaṁ || 10-7

10-7. The gods saw that Lord Vishnu was reclining comfortably on the coiled body of the celestial serpent called Seshnath. The jewels on the hoods of this serpent shone brilliantly and shed their glow on the inherently radiant body of Lord Vishnu, making the Lord's body all the more illuminated.

Verse no. 8:

श्रियः पद्मनिषण्णायाः क्षौमान्तरितमेखले।
अङ्के निक्षिप्तचरणमास्तीर्णकरपल्लवे॥ १०-८

śriyaḥ padmaṇiṣaṇṇāyāḥ kṣaumāntaritamekhale।
aṅke nikṣiptacaraṇamāstīrṇakarapallave || 10-8

10-8. When the gods approached Lord Vishnu, they beheld he was reclining comfortably on the couch formed by the coiled body of the celestial serpent, with his legs lying on the lap of goddess Laxmi, Lord Vishnu's consort. She was seated on a magnificent lotus flower and was softly massaging the feet of the Lord with her soft lotus-leaf like palms. In order to ensure that the metal of her waistband did not hurt Lord Vishnu's feet, she had covered that ornament with a layer of her sari (a long piece of seamless cloth wrapped around the body of a Hindu lady which she wears as her body-covering garment). To further ensure that the Lord's feet did not feel the even the slightest touch of the waistband's metal, she cupped the feet of the Lord with the lotus-like palm of one of her hands and used the other hand to softly massage the legs.

Verse no. 9:

प्रबुद्धपुण्डरीकाक्षम् बालातपनिभाम्शुकम्।
दिवसम् शारदमिव प्रारम्भसुखदर्शनम्॥ १०-९

prabuddhapuṇḍarīkākṣam bālātapanibhāmśukam।
divasam śāradamiva prārambhasukhadarśanam || 10-9

10-9. The gods saw the divine and blissful form of Lord Vishnu whose eyes resembled fully grown white lotuses, whose Pitambar (the name of the garment worn by Lord Vishnu) had a shining golden hue like that of the radiant sunshine during the morning hours on a clear day after sunrise, whose sight was so charming that it reminded one of the clear day of the autumn season, and whose august presence gave immense bliss and delight to sages and saints.

Verse no. 10:

प्रभानुलिप्तश्रीवत्सम् लक्ष्मीविभ्रमदर्पणम्।

कौस्तुभाख्यमपाम् सारम् बिभ्राणम् बृहतोरसा॥ १०-१०

prabhānuliptaśrīvatsam lakṣmīvibhramadarpaṇam।

kaustubhākhyamapām sāram bibhrāṇam bṛhatorasā || 10-10

10-10. The broad chest of Lord Vishnu was adorned by a magnificent jewel known as Kaustav Mani (which was obtained during the ancient churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons). It had a wonderful shine and glittered brilliantly. It was so large that often times, goddess Laxmi would see her face on its polished surface at the time of adorning herself (like a lady uses a mirror to see her face while grooming herself). The reflected light radiating out from the Kaustav Mani even illuminated the footmark of sage Bhrigu that was present on the Lord's chest¹.

[Note--¹Sage Bhrigu's footprint on the chest of Lord Vishnu: Sage Bhrigu is a well known sage and seer who appears in a number of Vedic and Purnaic works. His name 'Bhrigu' is derived from the root word 'Bhrij' or 'Bhraaj' which literally means to roast or burn, and therefore it could mean the sage, who was a fire sacrifice priest, had some mystical powers which allowed him to kindle the altar fire automatically by use of Mantras. According to mythological history, the patron God of lightening, Lord Maatarishwan, brought the celestial lightening down to earth and taught three priests the art of kindling the sacred altar fire using the Aranis ('the fire sticks' used to kindle fire by vigorous rubbing together). These three priests were the Bhrigu, the Angiras, and the Atharvan.

Sage Bhrigu is regarded as being one of the nine 'Manas Putras' of Brahma, the creator. [That is, Bhrigu was born as the son of Brahma because the latter wished in his mind and heart, the 'Mana', to have a son, a 'Putra', rather than the usual process by which a son is born, i.e. the physical process of procreation by intercourse.]

He is one of the seven celestial sages known as "Sapta-rishis".

He once tested the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and determined that Vishnu is the best amongst them and alone deserves worship. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapurāṇ, Skandha 10, Chapter 89, and in brief it is as follows—

Once all the sages had collected and decided to judge which of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, is the greatest. Sage Bhrigu was appointed to find it out. Bhrigu first went to Brahma and did not show any respect to him. This enraged Brahma, but somehow he managed to control himself. Then Bhrigu went to meet Shiva. Shiva came forward but Bhrigu did not want to meet him, accusing the Lord of following inauspicious way of life. This enraged Shiva who lifted his trident to kill Bhrigu. Then Parvati, the consort of Shiva, intervened and pacified him.

Finally, Bhrigu went to Vishnu who was reclining in his divine abode known as Vaikuntha. Bhrigu got annoyed that Vishnu did not get up to welcome him, and so he kicked the Lord on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep, and instead of becoming angry at Bhrigu asked for his forgiveness as he was unaware that the Brahmin has arrived as he was asleep. Further, Vishnu showed Bhrigu great respect

and said that instead of feeling insulted on being kicked on the chest, he is feeling honoured that a great sage had blessed him by touching his body with his august feet. This stunned Bhrigu; he was dumbfounded at the gracious and forgiving nature of Vishnu. But Vishnu's consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was extremely peeved, and she cursed the Brahmin that henceforth the entire Brahmin race will have to suffer because of lack of wealth and would be forced to beg for their sustenance.

Lord Vishnu wears the mark made by the sage's footprint on his chest as a token of respect that he has for learned Brahmins.

Bhrigu came back and narrated the entire thing to the assembly of sages. They decided that indeed it was Lord Vishnu who was the greatest because he had conquered anger, the worst of all the negative qualities and the cause of all strife and destruction. Anger was to become the greatest of evils and vices in this world, and forgiveness as the greatest of virtues.]

Verse no. 11:

बहुभिर्विटपाकारैर्दिव्याभरणभूषितैः।

आविर्भूतमपाम् मध्ये पारिजातमिवापरम्॥ १०-११

bahubhirviṭapākārairdivyābharaṇabhūṣitaiḥ।

āvirbhūtamapām madhye pārijātamivāparam || 10-11

10-11. Lord Vishnu was adorned by divine jewels and had long arms that resembled long branches of a tree. This gave the impression to the beholder that a large Kalpa Tree (the evergreen tree of the heaven that has a mystical power to fulfil all wishes) had grown up in the ocean

Verse no. 12:

दैत्यस्त्रीगण्डलेखानाम् मदरागविलोपिभिः।

हेतिभिश्चेतनावद्भिरुदीरितजयस्वनम्॥ १०-१२

daityastrīgaṇḍalekhānām madarāgavilopibhiḥ।

hetibhiścetanāvadbhīrudīritajayasvanam || 10-12

10-12. When the gods arrived to meet Lord Vishnu, they saw that the Lord's weapons, which had earlier eliminated the evil demons and thereby trounced the pride and haughtiness of their wives (who thought that their husbands were invincible), had assumed a visible form and were singing laurels in praise of the Lord. These weapons were Chakra (serrated discus), Gada (mace) etc. (the others being a bow and a sword, as well as the conch that the Lord used to blow to mark his victory over evil forces).

Verse no. 13:

मुक्तशेषविरोधेन कुलिशव्रणलक्ष्मणा।

उपस्थितम् प्राञ्जलिना विनीतेन गरुत्मता॥ १०-१३

muktaśeṣavirodhena kuliśavraṇalakṣmaṇā।

upasthitam prāñjalīnā vinītena garutmatā || 10-13

10-13. Garud (the celestial Eagle which is the mount of Lord Vishnu) had abandoned his animosity with the celestial Serpent¹ (the Seshnath on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu was reclining), and who still bore the mark of injury that he sustained earlier when Indra, the king of gods, had caused by hitting him with his thunderbolt², now stood before Lord Vishnu very humbly, with palms of his hands joined in a prayerful mode, and ever ready to serve the Lord.

[Note--¹Sage Kashyap had two wives, Kadru and Vinata. Kadru was the mother of serpents known as the Nagas led by Seshnath, and Vinata of the birds led by Garud. Once Kadru tricked Vinata and made the latter her slave. In order to free his mother from this curse, Garud struck a deal with the Nagas who demanded that if he brings some Amrit (an elixir of immortality) from Indra, the king of the gods, so that they could drink it, then they would tell their mother Kadru to release Vinata from slavery to her.

Garud fought with the gods led by their king Indra to snatch the pitcher containing Amrit from them. When he came back, he tricked the Nagas by saying that they must first purify themselves by performing rituals to become eligible to drink it. Meanwhile, he gave Amrit to his mother and other Birds. When Vinata drank a drop of Amrit, she was freed from the curse of slavery. But this denial of Amrit to the Nagas made Garud and Nagas eternal enemies. This also ensured that Garud always gave protection to those who worship him against the danger of evil forces represented by the serpents and demons who lurk in the darkness and attack on the sly.

²It was during this fight with the gods to get the needed Amrit that Garud was injured by Indra's thunderbolt. When Indra observed that Garud was flying away with the pitcher containing Amrit, he threw his Vajra (thunderbolt) to stop him, but Garud did not bother. The strike of the thunderbolt, however, left an injury mark on Garud's body.

Meanwhile, after his main objective of freeing his mother from slavery was accomplished, Garud gave the remaining part of Amrit back to Indra, thereby befriendng him once again.]

Verse no. 14:

योगनिद्रान्तविशदैः पावनैरवलोकनैः।

भृग्वदीननुगृहणन्तम् सौखशायनिकानृषीन्॥ १०-१४

yoganidrāntaviśadaiḥ pāvanairavalokanaiḥ।

bhṛgvādīnanugṛhṇantam saukhaśāyanikānṛṣīn || 10-14

10-14. Lord Vishnu woke up from his Yoga Nidra (deep sleep state of consciousness; a state obtained during meditation when one seems to be sleeping blissfully)¹ and looked refreshed and calm. He saw great sages such as Bhrigu and others standing before him (alongside the gods) and prayerfully making enquiries about his well-being.

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 6 herein above.]

Verse no. 15:

**प्रणिपत्य सुरास्तस्मै शमयित्रे सुरदिवषाम्।
अथैनम् तुष्टुवुः स्तुत्यमवाङ्मनसगोचरम्॥ १०-१५**

praṇipatya surāstasmai śamayitre suradviṣām।
athainam tuṣṭuvuḥ stutyamavāṅmanasagocaram || 10-15

10-15. Then the gods began offering prayers in honour of Lord Vishnu who is an eliminator of Asurs (non-gods or the demons), who is worthy of praise and offering of obeisance, and who is beyond the comprehension and reach of the mind, the faculty of speech and other faculties of the gross body. {He cannot be understood by the mind in entirety, cannot be described, cannot be seen, cannot be felt and cannot be comprehended by any of the organs of the gross body.}

Verse no. 16:

**नमो विश्वसृजे पूर्वम् विश्वम् तदनु बिभ्रते।
अथ विश्वस्य सम्हर्त्रे तुभ्यम् त्रेधास्थितात्मने॥ १०-१६**

namo viśvasrje pūrvam viśvam tadanu bibhrate।
atha viśvasya samhartre tubhyam tredhāsthitātmane || 10-16

10-16. The assembled gods said: "Oh Lord! Playing different roles, it is actually you who had first created this world, then it is you who protect it, and in the end it is you who would bring this creation to its end. Thus you are the Supreme Being. We bow before you.

[Note--The Supreme Being takes on three roles--first as the Creator known as Brahma, he initiates the process of creation; then as Vishnu he protects this creation, and finally as Shiva he brings this creation to an end.]

Verse no. 17:

**रसान्तराण्येकरसम् यथा दिव्यम् पयोऽश्नुते।
देशे देशे गुणेष्वेवमवस्थास्त्वमविक्रियः॥ १०-१७**

rasāntarāṇyekarasam yathā divyam payo'snutel
deśe deśe guṇeṣvevamavasthāstvamavikriyaḥ || 10-17

10-17. Just as the rain water from the sky has a uniform taste and colour in its original form whenever it is tasted, yet it acquires different hues of taste and colour when it falls on the ground and gets involved or mixed with other sources of water (such as the rivers, seas, lakes, well etc. found in different regions of the world), or takes other shapes (such as when present in sap in different kinds of plants, or as juice of different fruits and vegetables, or anything else that has a liquid form)--so in like manner the same Lord (i.e. the Supreme Being), though being uniform and immutable, assumes different characters and qualities when he plays different roles in this creation (as the creator, the protector and the concluder of creation).

[Note--The idea is that though the Supreme Being remains unchanged and uniform in all respects, but he has to adopt certain characters and qualities that fits in with the role he has to play as the creator Brahma, as the protector Vishnu, and as the concluder Shiva. Essentially it is the same cosmic Consciousness that is present in all these three gods of the Trinity, but from the outside they appear to have distinct forms and characters.

For example, Brahma is depicted as a god with four heads and four arms, he looks old like a family patriarch, and besides his role of creation he is also said to be wise and a repository of knowledge as it is he who pronounced the Vedas. Whenever gods need advice, they go to him. Brahma is the first god of the Trinity who is responsible for creation.

Lord Shiva is depicted in the form of an ascetic, smeared with ash, wearing a garland of serpents around his neck, holding a trident and playing the damaru (a small hour-glass shaped playing drum with small pellets attached at both ends which strike the two broader ends to produce a sound when the damaru is shaken rapidly left and right in a semicircular motion). Shiva is the third god of the Trinity who is responsible for conclusion of the creation at the end of its life.

Lord Vishnu is the protector and caretaker god. He has four hands holding a mace, a conch, a discus and sword. Since he takes care of this world, he is very benevolent, magnanimous, understanding, practical, kind and polite. In his role as the protector of the world, he is deemed to be most respectable, honourable and sought after of the three gods. Vishnu is the second god of the Trinity.

By assigning the term 'Supreme Being' to universally mean Lord Vishnu, it is implied that the job of giving protection and providing for sustenance of all living beings in this world is a very important and commendable job, more than merely producing and ending anything, thereby making Lord Vishnu a virtual 'king' of creation as a king also plays a similar role with regards to the subjects of his kingdom.

This is also why there are said to be three types of qualities or virtues in this world--viz. Sata Guna, Raja Guna, and Tama Guna. Lord Brahma has dominance of Sata Guna, Vishnu of Raja Guna, and Shiva of Tama Guna. The Supreme Being, on the other hand, is neutral as all these three gunas, though present in him, neutralise each other.]

Verse no. 18:

अमेयो मितलोकस्त्वमनर्थी प्रार्थनावहः।

अजितो जिष्णुरत्यन्तमव्यक्तो व्यक्तकारणम्॥ १०-१८

ameyo mitalokastvamanarthī prārthanāvahaḥ।

ajito jiṣṇuratyantamavyakto vyaktakāraṇam || 10-18

10-18. Oh Lord! You are immeasurable, infinite and incomprehensible yourself, but you can measure and comprehend the world (as it has been created by you). You are yourself without any desire and don't have any kind of wish, but you fulfil the desires and wishes of all others (as you are the one who fulfils the needs of all living beings in this creation). You are invincible yourself, but you have conquered everything and everyone in the world (such as death that spares no one). And though you are extremely sublime, subtle and imperceptible yourself (in your primary form of pure cosmic Consciousness), yet you are the cause of everything that is perceptible in this material world (which is gross).

Verse no. 19:

हृदयस्थमनासन्नमकामम् त्वाम् तपस्विनम्।

दयालुमनघस्पृष्टम् पुराणमजरम् विदुः॥ १०-१९

hrdayasthamanāsannamakāmam tvām tapasvinam।

dayālumanaghasprṣṭam purāṇamajaram viduḥ || 10-19

10-19. Oh Lord! Great sages and ascetics, who are self-realised and enlightened, understand that you dwell in their hearts, yet they consider you inaccessible because you seem to be so far away from them because they find it very difficult to see you and establish communication with you. They also know that you are selfless and without any desires. They realise that though you are compassionate, yet you maintain calmness and equanimity, remaining unruffled and unaffected by grief and sorrows. And similarly, they are also aware that though you are the eldest Being in creation, yet you are beyond decay and death (i.e. you never age and never die).

Verse no. 20:

सर्वज्ञस्त्वमविज्ञातः सर्वयोनिस्त्वमात्मभूः।

सर्वप्रभुरनीशस्त्वमेकस्त्वम् सर्वरूपभाक्॥ १०-२०

sarvajñastvamavijñātaḥ sarvayonistvamātmabhūḥ।

sarvaprabhuranīśastvamekastvam sarvarūpabhāk || 10-20

10-20. Oh Lord! Since you are omniscient and all-knowing, you know everything and everybody in existence, yet you remain unknown and unintelligible for others. You are the cause of everything coming into being or happening, but you yourself have no cause or reason of being present or doing anything that you do. You are the unquestioned Lord of everyone, but no one is your superior or lord. And though you

are one, uniform and immutable, yet you assume myriad of forms with countless features in this world (because everything in this world is only a manifested form of your own self, and none have an existence that is devoid of you at its core).

Verse no. 21:

सप्तसामोपगीतम् त्वाम् सप्तार्णवजलेशयम्।

सप्तार्चिमुखमाचख्युः सप्तलोकैकसम्श्रयम्॥ १०-२१

saptasāmopagītam tvām saptārṇavajaleśayam।

saptārcimukhamācakhyuḥ saptalokaikasamśrayam || 10-21

10-21. Oh Lord! Those who are knowledgeable, wise and learned as well as well-versed in the scriptures, assert that you are the Lord who is the object of praise and worship by the seven types of hymns of the Sama Veda¹ when it is recited by scholars, that you are the Lord who reclines on the surface of the seven seas (or are the patron god of these seven seas)², that the seven types of flames of fire represent your mouth and tongue (i.e. you represent the fire god with its seven types of flames that symbolise its seven tongues)³, and that you are the only support and caretaker of the seven worlds⁴.

[Note--¹The Sama Veda is meant to be sung. Its hymns are not chanted but sung to a set pattern of musical tunes called the 'seven swars' or the seven kinds of sounds produced by classical singers using their vocal chords. These seven types of hymns each using a particular type of tune are the following: Gaayatra, Rathantara, Vaamdevya, Braihatsmaan, Vairupa, Vairaaja, and Shakvari.

²The seven seas are the following: Lavana (salty sea), Ikshu (sea of sugarcane juice; sweet and honey-like that symbolises richness and abundance), Suraa (wine-like sweet and intoxicating water), Sarpis (that which is infested by sea-serpents), Dadhi (sea that has the surface resembling curd; frothy white and thick, sour and pungent), Kshira (ocean of milk; the celestial ocean), and Jala-sagar (terrestrial sea filled with water, such as large lakes and pure water reservoirs).

From a practical modern point of view, these seven seas are the following: Arctic, North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian and the South sea or the Antarctica. The term 'seven seas' may also imply a grouping of some of these other seas: the Red sea, the Mediterranean sea, the Black sea, the Arabian sea, the Persian gulf, the Gulf of Mexico, the South China sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Straits of Malacca, the Singapore straits, the Gulf of Thailand, the Adriatic sea, the Caribbean sea, and the Aegean sea.

The simple idea is that since water is a life-sustaining liquid, Lord Vishnu, as the life-sustaining force of creation, is present imperceptibly in all sources and forms of water.

³The seven tongues of fire are known as Karaali (violent and scorching), Dhumini (surrounded by a cloud of smoke; smoky), Shevta (whitish and bluish flames), Lohita (with a red hue), Nila-lohita (a mixture of blue and red flames), Suvarna (golden coloured flames of a brightly light fire), and Padma-raaga (of the soft colour of a lotus flower). During fire sacrifices, all these colours of the fire are noticeable.

⁴The seven worlds are the following: Bhu-loka, Bhuvar-loka, Suvar-loka, Mahar-loka, Jana-loka, Tapa-loka, and Satya-loka.

It is visualised that the creation is not flat but a large spherical ball with seven concentric layers or circles of existential life. All life exists within this parameter. The Bhu-loka is at the center, and the Satya-loka at the outer edge, with all the other lokas or worlds lying in between these two. This is very much a scientific world view of the ancient sages as they knew that the earth was not flat but a sphere, and the different layers of its atmosphere are also therefore circular in nature as they surround the earth at varying distances from its center.]

Verse no. 22:

**चतुर्वर्गफलम् ज्ञानम् कालावस्थाश्चतुर्युगाः।
चतुर्वर्णमयो लोकस्त्वत्तः सर्वम् चतुर्मुखात्॥ १०-२२**

caturvargaphalam jñānam kālāvasthāścaturyugāḥ।
caturvarṇamayo lokastvattāḥ sarvam caturmukhāt || 10-22

10-22. Oh Lord! All knowledge that lead to the attainment of the four fruits of life¹, as well as being informed about all the four periods of time that form the four yugas or eras², and all the four Varnas (classes) of human existence³--verily indeed, all such knowledge emanate from you and revealed by your four mouths in your manifestation as the creator Brahma (who has four mouths and had pronounced all the laws that govern this world).

[Note--¹The four fruits or rewards of living a righteous way of life are the following: Artha (financial prosperity), Dharma (living a life in accordance with the tenets of Dharma which in turn have countless blessings), Kaam (fulfilment of all desires), and Mukti and Moksha (liberation and deliverance of the soul, its final emancipation and salvation from the cycle of transmigration).

²The four eras are the following: Sata Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga, and the Kali Yuga respectively.

The Sata Yuga was the best of the four eras when Dharma was in its prime and fire sacrifices and vedic rituals were part of life.

In the second era, the era of the birth of Lord Ram, Dharma was still there, but it retained only three-fourth of its glory symbolised by the word 'treta', meaning three-fourth.

The third era was when Dharma retained only a half of its former glory, and it was the era when Lord Krishna was born and the Mahabharat war was fought. The word 'dwapar' itself means 'a half' or 'only two parts of the whole'.

The fourth and the current era is called Kali Yuga marked by darkness and decline of Dharma. The word 'Kali' means 'dark'.

Each era has its characteristic features, and a wise man knows them by the grace of Lord Vishnu.

³The four Varnas are the four segments in which the society was divided for proper governance and maintaining law and order amongst its members. These four Varnas are: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. The job of the Brahmin was to

teach and act as guides and advisors to the rest of the society. The Kshatriyas were mandated to give protection to the society by acting as kings and warriors. The Vaishyas looked after commerce and trade, and provided the necessities of life. And the main job of the Shudras was to serve the rest of the society so that its other members are freed from daily mundane tasks, and focus their energy and attention instead on the task assigned to them as outlined herein above.]

Verse no. 23:

अभ्यासनिगृहीतेन मनसा हृदयाश्रयम्।

ज्योतिर्मयम् विचिन्वन्ति योगिनस्त्वाम् विमुक्तये॥ १०-२३

abhyāsanigrhītena manasā hṛdayāśrayam।

jyotirmayam vicinvanti yoginastvām vimuktaye || 10-23

10-23. Oh Lord! Great sages and ascetics who are learned and self-restrained, practice deep meditation in order to seek emancipation and they yearn to attain your holy feet, though you live in their own hearts in the form of consciousness and knowledge (yet they can't see you).

[Note--Refer to verse no. 19 in this context.]

Verse no. 24:

अजस्य गृह्णतो जन्म निरीहस्य हतद्विषः।

स्वपतो जागरूकस्य याथार्थ्यम् वेद कस्तव॥ १०-२४

ajasya grhṇato janma nirīhasya hatadvīṣaḥ।

svapato jāgarūkasya yāthārthyam veda kastava || 10-24

10-24. Oh Lord! Though you have no birth, yet you have manifested yourself in some or other corporeal form (such as a fish, a boar, a tortoise etc. to protect this earth whenever it faced some kind of danger)¹. Though you have no animosity with anyone as all are equal for you, yet you have intervened and eliminated the evil forces represented by the demons as if they were your personal enemies (because these demons had been tormenting humble creatures who depend upon you for survival and protection). Again, though you recline in a blissful state of Yoga Nidra (meditative deep sleep), yet you always remain awake and alert.

Verily indeed, you are so mystical and incomprehensible that it is not possible for anyone to know the truth about you in its entirety.

[Note--¹These are some of the non-human forms of Lord Vishnu that he took to salvage the earth from doom.

(i) The Fish incarnation of Vishnu—In this incarnation as a Fish or Matsya, which is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were

made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They re-populated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah's Arc.

(ii) The Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu—It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

(iii) The Boar incarnation of Vishnu—It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the ocean where it had vanished. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapurāṇ, Book III, Chapter 13, 18 and 19. In brief it is as follows:

In the beginning of creation, Lord Brahma, the creator, produced Manu and Satrupa, the first male and female. The couple asked the creator to tell them what they are expected to do, at which Brahma told them to start the process of procreation and spread their off-springs on the ground, thereby propagating the human race. Manu was left flummoxed as he did not see any land to carry out his mandate. It was because the demon Hiranyaaksha had hidden it under water of the celestial ocean (or in the void of the nether world ruled by the demons).

Finding no land to stand upon and start the process of procreation, Manu complained to Brahma; the latter meditated and discovered the reason for the earth's disappearance. Brahma then appealed to Lord Vishnu, the 'sustainer and protector of this creation, and the second god of the Trinity'. Immediately, a Vishnu manifested himself as a tiny 'Boar', the size of a thumb, which grew in size to assume a phenomenal dimension. The Boar dug up the earth from where it was concealed, held it secure on its tusks and revealed it for Brahma.

Meanwhile, when the demon Hiranyaaksha came to know of it, he faced Lord Boar with his gigantic mace and challenged the latter for a duel. In the battle that followed, Lord Vishnu, disguised as a Boar, slayed the demon and finally set the earth free from his clutches.

An interesting development played out in the meantime. The rescued earth itself needed somewhere to be kept. It was like a huge 'ball'. So, the Boar placed it on the surface of the celestial ocean from underneath of which it was rescued, and by his mystical powers made it float on it like a buoy. This is why the land mass of the earth seems to be surrounded by water from all sides.

This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil.

An Upanishad preached by Lord Varāha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varāha is known as Goddess Vāraahi.]

Verse no. 25:

शब्दादीन्विषयान्भोक्तुम् चरितुम् दुश्चरम् तपः।

पर्याप्तोऽसि प्रजाः पातुमौदासीन्येन वर्तितुम्॥ १०-२५

śabdādīnviṣayānbhoktum caritum duścaram tapaḥ।

paryāpto'si prajāḥ pātumaudāsīnyena vartitum || 10-25

10-25. Oh Lord! It is you who manifests yourself in various forms to carry out different functions and enjoy various sensory pleasures pertaining to touch, sound, form, taste and smell (that are related to the sense organs of skin, ear, eye, mouth and nose respectively).

For instance, it is you who revealed himself (as Lord Krishna) and enjoyed these worldly enjoyments. Again, it is you who revealed himself (as Nara-Narayan) to do severe Tapa {i.e. penance and austerity}. It is indeed you who had revealed himself (as Lord Ram) to become a king and take care of the subjects of your realm. And similarly, it is you who had revealed himself (as Gautam Buddha) to preach peace, tranquillity, simplicity and forgiveness as well as renunciation and dispassion by the example of your own life (as Buddha who had diligently practiced these virtues).

{Therefore, you have set an example of how an ascetic should live and also how an ordinary person should live. Both can remain detached from the world while still living in the midst of sensory pleasures.}

Verse no. 26:

**बहुधाप्यागमैर्भिन्नाः पन्थानः सिद्धिहेतवः।
त्वय्येव निपतन्त्योघा जाह्नवीया इवार्णवे॥ १०-२६**

bahudhāpyāgamairbhinnāḥ panthānaḥ siddhihetavaḥ।
tvayyeva nipatanttyoghā jāhnavīyā ivārṇave || 10-26

10-26. Oh Lord! Just as all the different branches of river Ganges and other great rivers (of India) ultimately fall in the same body of water known as the 'ocean', so do all the different scriptures and religious treatises that lay down principles of spiritual philosophy which teach a person the way and the mean of attaining the ultimate fruit of existence in this world in the form of doctrines that describe how liberation and deliverance from the literally endless cycle of birth and death can be achieved--verily indeed, all of them talk about you and point to you as the ultimate or the final destination of the soul where it can find eternal peace and rest, albeit they do so in different languages and in different contexts.

{To wit, all the scriptures and religious texts point to you when they talk about the fruit of all righteous endeavours undertaken by a person in this world in an effort to find eternal peace and rest for one's soul. All efforts finally lead to you; all religious endeavours culminate in the soul attaining your holy feet; all spiritual philosophies teach how the soul can attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation by following the path that leads to you in your form as the Supreme Being representing the Cosmic Supreme Consciousness.}

Verse no. 27:

**त्वय्यावेशितचित्तानाम् त्वत्समर्पितकर्मणाम्।
गतिस्त्वम् वीतरागाणामभूयःसम्निवृत्तये॥ १०-२७**

tvayyāveśitacittānām tvatsamarpitakarmanām |
 gatiśtvam vītarāgānāmbhūyaḥsamnivr̥ttaye || 10-27

10-27. Oh Lord! You grant deliverance from the cycle of transmigration to those ascetics and devotees who are free from the negative traits of having attachments and jealousy (i.e. those who practice the virtues of equanimity, dispassion, tolerance, patience and neutrality), as well as those who always meditate upon you, and who offer the fruits of all their endeavours to you.

Such people become eligible to receive your blessings in the form of freedom from being tied to the endless cycle of birth and death, because you grant their souls salvation and emancipation.

Verse no. 28:

प्रत्यक्षोऽप्यपरिच्छेद्यो मह्यादिर्महिमा तव।
 आप्तवागनुमानाभ्याम् साध्यम् त्वाम् प्रति का कथा॥ १०-२८

pratyakṣo'pyaparicchedyo mahyādirmahimā tava |
 āptavāganumānābhyām sādhyam tvām prati kā kathā || 10-28

10-28. Oh Lord! Your greatness and glories cannot be measured and known even by seeing those things that are visible and demonstrated in this creation, such as the earth, the sky and the planets with their vastness and multifarious mysteries, which are all created and governed by you, and in all of which you reside in a very subtle form, then say how can one measure or know about you and your eternal, cosmic glory, greatness and form by relying merely on words that are heard from the scriptures or those words that are written by poets and bards?

{Verily indeed, your majestic presence is beyond comprehension, and any attempt to measure you or fathom your glories and understand your greatness is like attempting to measure the depth of the sky using an ordinary measuring tape. If such great physical things of this creation as the earth, the sky and the planets, which a person sees, feels and witnesses first hand, are insufficient to tell anything about your true greatness, then say how can abstract words describe you?}

[Note--The vastness and the multifarious mysteries of the earth, the sky and the planets cannot be fully known by anyone. And all these entities, along with many others such as those existing in countless other universes and worlds, are all created by you. When one cannot fully grasp the secrets of these entities which have a definitive shape and quality, which are distinctly seen and felt, how is it possible then to know and understand about the creator who has crafted countless such entities as a pastime by merely reading or hearing the words of scriptures or those written by poets that attempt to describe the glories and the majesty of the Supreme Being? Obviously, the 'creator' has abilities and qualifications beyond our understanding to have enabled him to give into effect this vast canvas of unimaginable varieties, dimension and characteristics.]

Verse no. 29:

केवलम् स्मरणेनैव पुनासि पुरुषम् यतः।
अनेन वृत्तयः शेषा निवेदितफलास्त्वयि॥ १०-२९

kevalam smaraṇenaiva punāsi puruṣam yataḥ।
anena vṛttayaḥ śeṣā niveditaphalāstvayi || 10-29

10-29. Oh Lord! When those who merely remember you in their thoughts are given deliverance and happiness, then one can imagine the immensity of rewards that we would get (and have become eligible to get) when we have been fortunate to see you in a physical form reclining on a couch of the coiled body of Seshnath, and are able to speak and interact with you.

{By extension, any individual who is fortunate to see your physical form in this world, to speak to you, touch you and interact with you at a personal level, then no one can measure the rewards that accrue to that person. Hence, oh Lord, if you become gracious and benevolent enough to manifest yourself in this world with a physical body like other human beings, then countless devotees of yours would benefit from it.}

Verse no. 30:

उदधेरिव रत्नानि तेजाम्सीव विवस्वतः।
स्तुतिभ्यो व्यतिरिच्यन्ते दूराणि चरितानि ते॥ १०-३०

udadheriva ratnāni tejāmsīva vivasvataḥ।
stutibhyo vyatiricyante dūrāṇi caritāni te || 10-30

10-30. Oh Lord! Just as no one can count the jewels of the ocean or the rays of sunlight, so likewise no one can ever count or measure your virtues and characters that you depict in the myriad forms in which you exist in this creation at a subtle and sublime level.

{Oh Lord! You are all-pervading and all-encompassing in this creation, and there is no place where you are not present in some form or the other. And since this creation is so vast and multifarious in nature, it follows that it is impossible to understand what your specific virtues, qualities and characters are. That is why the Vedas speak of you as being 'Neti-Neti', i.e. not this nor that. In other words, whatever is said of you and your glories is just a fraction of the entirety, and it is not even like scratching the surface to know what lies underneath it.}

Verse no. 31:

अनवाप्तमवाप्तव्यम् न ते किञ्चन विद्यते।
लोकानुग्रह एवैको हेतुस्ते जन्मकर्मणोः॥ १०-३१

anavāptamavāptavyam na te kiñcana vidyate।
lokānugraha evaiko hetuste janmakarmaṇoḥ || 10-31

10-31. Oh Lord! There is nothing in this world to acquire which you are required to take a birth, for everything is within your reach without even making any effort to acquire or attain it. But still, you manifest yourself with a physical body in this world and do so many deeds simply because you wish to bless the world and its creatures by your presence amidst them, giving the latter an opportunity to have undiluted joy and enjoy the pleasure of spiritual bliss by the virtue of being physically near to you.

{To wit, doing good to the creatures of this world, to provide them with an opportunity to attain spiritual happiness, and to bless your devotees with your divine presence amongst them--these are some of the reasons why you manifest yourself in this world and do so many deeds that they could record and recount for generations to come, thereby benefiting not only the generation which interacts with you, but countless future generations as well.}

Verse no. 32:

महिमानम् यदुत्कीर्त्य तव सम्ह्रियते वचः।

श्रमेण तदशक्त्या वा न गुणानामियत्तया॥ १०-३२

mahimānam yadutkīrtya tava samhriyate vacaḥ।

śrameṇa tadaśaktyā vā na guṇānāmiyattayā || 10-32

10-32. Oh Lord! Now that we would become silent after having said whatever we could regarding your majesty's glories according to our limited knowledge and abilities, it does not mean that it sufficiently describes you or your glories and virtues, for, as we have already asserted, you and your glories are endless, and it is not possible to recall and narrate them fully.

Whatever we have said in your praise is like scratching the surface of something that has an immensity of dimension. We now decide to become silent as we feel helpless and exhausted while recounting your glories and mystical virtues any further as they are limitless as well as beyond our comprehension and abilities to recount."

Verse no. 33:

इति प्रसादयामासुस्ते सुरास्तमधोक्षजम्।

भूतार्थव्याहृतिः सा हि न स्तुतिः परमेष्ठिनः॥ १०-३३

iti prasādayāmāsuste surāstamadhokṣajam।

bhūtārthavyāhṛtiḥ sā hi na stutiḥ parameṣṭhinaḥ || 10-33

10-33. In this way, the gods were able to please Lord Vishnu by sincerely praying to him and honouring him with praises. The fact is that these prayers and honours were not flattery to please Lord Vishnu, but were actually a recapitulation of some of the countless glories and virtues of the Lord. Indeed, they were statements of fact, and no false or imaginary grandiose words meant to satisfy Lord Vishnu's ego.

Verse no. 34:

तस्मै कुशलसम्प्रश्नव्यञ्जितप्रीतये सुराः।
भयमप्रलयोद्वेलादाचख्युर्नैरृतोदधेः॥ १०-३४

tasmai kuśalasampraśnavyāñjitapritāye surāḥ।
bhayamapralayodvelādācakhyaurnairṛtodadheḥ || 10-34

10-34. Lord Vishnu felt happy and asked the assembled gods about their well-being. To his enquiry, the gods replied that many cruel demons have taken birth in this world who have unleashed a reign of terror and mayhem that has been causing immense suffering to everyone in this world, and their actions have brought about a situation that is no less horrifying and dangerous than the actual arrival of the doomsday. All rules of good conduct have vanished, and no order remains in this world.

Verse no. 35:

अथ वेलासमासन्नशैलरन्धानुवादिना।
स्वरेणोवाच भगवान् परिभूतार्णवध्वनिः॥ १०-३५

atha velāsamāsannaśailarandhrānuvādinā।
svareṇovāca bhagavān paribhūtārṇavadhvaniḥ || 10-35

10-35. Then Lord Vishnu replied to the gods in a deep, grave and resounding voice which resembled the rumble of the ocean, and echoed through the mountains and caves that surrounded it.

Verse no. 36:

पुराणस्य कवेस्तस्य वर्णस्थानसमीरिता।
बभूव कृतसम्स्कारा चरितार्थैव भारती॥ १०-३६

purāṇasya kavestasya varṇasthānasamīritā।
babhūva kṛtasamskāra caritārthaiva bhāratī || 10-36

10-36. When Lord Vishnu began to speak in a finely tuned and polished voice, using phonetically refined speech and articulate words that were grammatically perfect and highly refined, words that seemed to come out from his mouth like a collection gems, even goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of speech, learning, knowledge and erudition, felt glad and fulfilled. {Saraswati was happy that she has got her due honour when she heard Lord Vishnu speak so elegantly.}

Verse no. 37:

बभौ सदशनज्योत्स्ना सा विभोर्वदनोद्गता।
निर्यातशेषा चरणाद्गङ्गेवोर्ध्वप्रवर्तिनी॥ १०-३७

babhau sadaśanajyotsnā sā vibhorvadanodgatā |
niryātaśeṣā caraṇādgaṅgevordhvapravartinī || 10-37

10-37. When the all-able, omnipotent and omniscient Lord Vishnu spoke to the gods, it appeared that the words which came out from his auspicious mouth, through the rows of the Lord's glistening white teeth, were like the streams of river Ganges when it emerged through the many snowy crevices of the lofty heights of the snow-capped Himalayas and rolled down to earth, with its waters glistening and simmering from the sunlight that fell directly on its surface, or was reflected by the snow covered heights of the surrounding mountains.

[Note--According to the lore of the ancient Purans, river Ganges emerged from the toe of Lord Vishnu, and thence descended down to earth in a gigantic stream of white frothy water, cascading down relentlessly with a mighty roar through the countless crevices and fissures of the rocks of the snow-covered heights of the mighty Himalayas. Here, the teeth of Lord Vishnu are compared to the glistening snow of the Himalayas, the stream of words that emerged from his mouth to river Ganges, and the Lord's mouth itself from which came out his auspicious words as the original place from which the pure waters of the Ganges emerged to purify the world.]

Verse no. 38:

जाने वो रक्षसाक्रान्तावनुभावपराक्रमौ।
अङ्गिनाम् तमसेवोभौ गुणौ प्रथममध्यमौ॥ १०-३८

jāne vo rakṣasākrāntāvanubhāvaparākramau |
aṅginām tamasevobhau guṇau prathamamadhyamau || 10-38

10-38. Lord Vishnu said: "Oh Gods! I know that your powers and abilities have been subdued and your authority has been trampled upon by the demons led by their king (Ravana) just like the case of a person's good qualities represented by the Sata and Raja gunas are negated or neutralised when his bad qualities represented by the Tama guna become dominant and eclipse the former.

[Note--There are primarily three types of Gunas or qualities and virtues that are present in all living beings. The Tama guna is the worst kind, the Sata guna is the best kind, and the Raja guna lies in between the two. In holy persons, the Sata guna is the dominant player, while in evil persons the Tama guna is heavy over all other gunas. Those who have the Raja guna in prominence, they display the characteristics of good and bad in equal measure. Which of these two is more prominent than the other would determine the overall character and nature of that individual.

Majority of the gods such as Lord Brahma, the creator, and Lord Shiva, the concluder, as well as many great sages, saints and ascetics have the Sata guna as the dominant character. Similarly, many of the gods such as Indra, the king of gods, and junior gods as well as kings and rulers have the Raja guna as the dominant character. All of them are mindful of their deeds and actions, and are careful not to violate the laws of Dharma. But the demons have the Tama guna as a prominent character, which

in turn pushes whatever goodness they might have to the background, thereby making them ruthless, evil, haughty and cruel.

What Lord Vishnu implies here is that though all individuals have these three gunas present in him by default at the time of birth, but if due to certain reason the Tama guna component gets a better hold on the individual, and if he is not able to control its nefarious designs, then gradually the other two gunas, i.e. the Sata and the Raja, are decimated or neutralised within him, and that individual becomes no less than a demon in disguise of a human being.]

Verse no. 39:

**विदितम् तप्यमानम् च तेन मे भुवनत्रयम्।
अकामोपनतेनेव साधोर्हृदयमेनसा॥ १०-३९**

viditam tapyamānam ca tena me bhuvanatrayam |
akāmopanateneva sādhorhṛdayamenasā || 10-39

10-39. I also know that the demons led by their king (Ravana) are relentlessly tormenting the world and causing immense suffering to its inhabitants just like a sin, even if committed unconsciously or inadvertently by someone, continues to torment the heart of a nice person who can never think of committing a sin, or doing any kind of harm or causing any kind of suffering to anybody. {And when he discovers later on that one or the other of his acts or deeds has caused some kind of unintended misery to others, he is filled with remorse and a lot of guilt, though it may be too late for him to make amends. But this guilt leaves his otherwise pure heart tormented for a very long time, and he becomes immensely remorseful and distressed.}

[Note--The deeds and acts of the demons had spread terror throughout the world, and even those who are not directly hurt by them feel terrorised and fearful of attack any time of the day. This constant fear of the demons had demoralised every creature, and even if one wished to do some kind of religious deed, he would avoid doing it out of fear of being attacked by these demons. It was a constant fear, and its negative effects were felt by everyone in the world even if they were not directly involved in any kind of hostility with the demons.]

Verse no. 40:

**कार्येषु चैककार्यत्वादभ्यर्थोऽस्मि न वज्रिणा।
स्वयमेव हि वातोऽग्नेः सारथ्यम् प्रतिपद्यते॥ १०-४०**

kāryeṣu caikakāryatvādabhyartho'smi na vajriṇā |
svayameva hi vāto'gneḥ sārathyam pratipadyate || 10-40

10-40. It is my and Indra's (the king of god's) duty to eliminate the evil forces symbolised by the demons, as well as to grant protection and succour to the world and its living beings. Hence, there was no need for Indra to come here (as the head of the delegation of gods) and plead with me in this regard, just like there is no need to ask

the air to help the fire keep burning once it is lit, for the wind-god automatically begins to help the fire-god to do what it is supposed to do--i.e. burn and produce flames¹.

{Since we, me and Indra, have the same goal of protecting the world from the horrors of the demons, there was no real need for Indra to make a special request to me to do so, for it is my duty by default.}

[Note--¹When the fire is lit, it automatically becomes incumbent upon the wind-god represented by the air to help it remain alive. Without the aid of air, the fire would extinguish automatically. So therefore, both the 'fire-god' and the 'wind-god' have to work in tandem to keep the flames of the fire alive, for otherwise the fire would die. Likewise, both myself and Indra are bound by duty to take action jointly, and to help each other in order to maintain law and order in this creation, and should evil forces raise their hood, then we both are equally responsible to tackle this nuisance jointly.]

Verse no. 41:

स्वासिधारापरिहृतः कामम् चक्रस्य तेन मे।
स्थापितो दशमो मूर्धा लभ्यामश इव रक्षसा॥ १०-४१

svāsidhārāparihṛtaḥ kāmam cakrasya tena me।
sthāpito daśamo mūrdhā labhyāṁśa iva rakṣasā || 10-41

10-41. In some previous time, Ravana had offered his nine heads to Lord Shiva to please him. But he did not offer his last tenth head. So far so good, as it appears that he (Ravana) had not done so because destiny had prevailed upon him to preserve his tenth head to be severed by my discus to bring about his death. Hence, so be it; it is now certain that I shall slay him by severing his tenth head.

Verse no. 42:

स्रष्टुर्वरातिसर्गात्तु मया तस्य दुरात्मनः।
अत्यारूढम् रिपोः सोढम् चन्दनेनेव भोगिनः॥ १०-४२

sraṣṭurvarātisargāttu mayā tasya durātmanah।
atyārūḍham ripoḥ soḍham candaneneva bhoginah || 10-42

10-42. Just as a sandalwood tree tolerates a poisonous snake creeping up its stem and branches, in like manner I too had tolerated the rise of the wicked and evil Ravana to respect the boons that he had received from the creator Brahma.

{I had hitherto remained quiet in deference to Brahma as I did not want to undermine his authority, honour and seniority in this creation. But now that all of you gods ask me to intervene, that reservation of mine stands nullified. Now I have to act to respect your wish, as it is a wish for the common good of the world.}

[Note--Ravana had done severe penance and observed austerities to please Brahma. When the Creator asked him to seek some boon as a reward, Ravana asked for

invincibility and overriding powers in this world. Once Brahma granted his wish, Ravana became emboldened and went on a rampage. Lord Vishnu says that till now he had kept quiet in deference to Brahma's authority and honour. He also wanted to subtly warn Brahma to be careful next time while granting boons at the drop of a hat, so to say, as his benevolence and magnanimity is often exploited by unscrupulous elements that then cause havoc all around, not even sparing the gods.]

Verse no. 43:

धातारम् तपसा प्रीतम् ययाचे स हि राक्षसः।

दैवात्सर्गादवध्यत्वम् मर्त्येष्वस्थापराङ्मुखः॥ १०-४३

dhātāram tapasā prītam yayāce sa hi rākṣasaḥ।

daivātsargādavadhyatvam martyeṣvāsthāparāṇmukhaḥ || 10-43

10-43. Ravana had asked Brahma to grant him a boon of immunity from death and harm so that he would not be killed at the hands of the gods, but he spared humans from this blanket protection for himself as he thought that if the gods won't be able to kill or harm him, then he has no fear from human beings whom he treated as being inconsequential as a humble twig.

{Ravana thought that if all-powerful and immortal gods won't be able to harm or kill him, then surely mortal human beings, who are weaker than the gods, won't be able to do so.}

Verse no. 44:

सोऽहम् दाशरथिर्भूत्वा रणभूमेर्बलिक्षमम्।

करिष्यामि शरैस्तीक्ष्णैस्तच्छिरःकमलोच्चयम्॥ १०-४४

so'ham dāśarathirbhūtvā raṇabhūmerbalikṣamam।

kariṣyāmi śaraistīkṣṇaistacchiraḥkamaloccayam || 10-44

10-44. Therefore, to honour your wish and to fulfil my duty as the protector and caretaker of this world, I will take birth in the household of king Dashrath of Ayodhya, and kill that demon Ravana by severing his heads with my arrows and offering these heads to the patron deity of the battle-field just like one offers lotus flowers during a sacred sacrifice.

[Note--Here, Lord Vishnu likens his act of slaying Ravana to a sacred duty done during the performance of a religious sacrifice when he says he will offer his head to the deity of the battle-field as one offers a lotus flower to the deity during a sacrifice. The Lord was implying that he will kill Ravana not as a personal revenge against him, but as part of his moral responsibility and sacred duty to ensure that the world and its innocent creatures can live peaceful, and evil forces are brought to justice. If anything is done for wider good and with good intent, then even if it seems wrong from an individual's viewpoint, yet it is justified and an honourable act.]

Verse no. 45:

अचिराद्यज्वभिर्भागम् कल्पितम् विधिवत्पुनः।
मायाविभिरनालीढमादास्यध्वे निशाचरैः॥ १०-४५

acirādyajvabhirbhāgam kalpitam vidhivatpunaḥ।
māyāvibhiranālīḍhamādāsyadhve niśācaraiḥ || 10-45

10-45. Oh Gods! Be assured that very soon you will get your share of offerings that are made during sacrifices, which are at present snatched by the demons (called 'Nishchara / niśācara' which literally means 'stalkers of the night').

Verse no. 46:

वैमानिकाः पुण्यकृतस्त्यजन्तु मरुताम् पथि।
पुष्पकालोकसम्क्षोभम् मेघावरणतत्पराः॥ १०-४६

vaimānikāḥ puṇyakṛtastyajantu marutām pathi।
puṣpakālokaśamkṣobham meghāvaraṇatātparāḥ || 10-46

10-46. Now therefore, all of you should be free from fear of the demons and their king Ravana. Roam fearlessly in the sky in your air-planes or any other means you like, and don't be scared and go to hide behind the clouds if you see the Pushpak plane carrying Ravana. Don't be afraid of him any more.

Verse no. 47:

मोक्ष्यध्वे स्वर्गबन्दीनाम् वेणीबन्धनदूषितान्।
शापयन्त्रितपौलस्त्यबलात्कारकचग्रहैः॥ १०-४७

mokṣyadhve svargabandīnām veṇībandhanadūṣitān।
śāpayantritaṭpaulastyabalātkāraḥcagrahaiḥ || 10-47

10-47. Ravana had captured countless celestial damsels of the heaven and dragged them to his place by grabbing them by their long hairs. Yet, other than this, he hadn't had the courage to violate their modesty by touching their bodies with a malicious intent out of fear of the curse of Nala-kuber¹. Now, all these damsels would soon be freed, and you can honourably take them back to heaven."

[Note--¹Nala-kuber had once cursed Ravana that if he ever tries to force himself upon a woman against her wish and one who does not like him, then his head would split into seven pieces. This curse was cast by Nala-kuber when his uncle Ravana had once sexually assaulted and tried to force himself upon the former's first wife known as Rambha. Nala-kuber was the son of Kuber, the treasurer of heaven. Refer: Mahabharat, Van Parva, Chapter 264, verse nos. 58-59.]

Verse no. 48:

रावणावग्रहकलान्तमिति वागमृतेन सः।
अभिवृष्य मरुत्सस्यम् कृष्णमेघस्तिरोदधे॥ १०-४८

rāvaṇāvagrahaklāntamiti vāgamṛtena saḥ।
abhivṛṣya marutsasyam kṛṣṇameghastirodadhe || 10-48

10-48. In this aforesaid manner, Lord Vishnu disappeared from sight after assuring the gods and making them feel contented and happy. It was just the case of a dark rain-bearing cloud first showering its cool and life-restoring rain to restore life on a parched land that had been scorched by the heat of the sun, and then disappearing from sight.

Here in this analogy, Lord Vishnu is like the rain-bearing cloud, his words of assurance are like the cool life-restoring rain, the tormented gods are like the parched land, and the horrors of Ravana are like the heat of the sun that had brought drought to the world in the form of immense sufferings.

Verse no. 49:

पुरहूतप्रभृतयः सुरकार्योद्यतम् सुराः।
अम्रशैरनुययुर्विष्णुम् पुष्पैर्वायुमिव द्रुमाः॥ १०-४९

purahūtaprabhṛtayaḥ surakāryodyatam surāḥ।
amśairanuyayurviṣṇum puṣpairvāyumiva drumāḥ || 10-49

10-49. Just like trees welcome and offer their obeisance to the wind by letting the fragrance of their flowers follow the course of the wind in its wake, so did the gods decide to honour Lord Vishnu and follow him to earth by revealing a fraction of their selves in the form of monkeys and bears to help the Lord when he manifests himself in the form of a human being by taking birth in the household of king Dashrath (as promised by Lord Vishnu in verse no. 44 herein above).

[Note--The flowers inherently have a natural fragrance, but it remains limited to the area immediately surrounding the tree and its branches. It is only when the breeze blows that this fragrance spreads to other parts of the garden and wider area around it. If there are countless trees of a particular variety in a garden, then a strong breeze would carry the combined fragrance of all the flowers far and wide, making people aware of the existence of a particular variety of flower in areas from where the eye cannot actually see either the garden or its trees.

Similarly, when Lord Vishnu revealed himself as Lord Ram, then all the gods revealed themselves too in the form of monkeys and bears who took birth and spread over a wide swathe of land. Their presence would have gone unnoticed as is the presence of myriad other animals on this earth, had they not participated in the army of Lord Ram when the Lord fought with Ravana in order to kill him. This is like the wind represented by Lord Ram carrying the fragrance of the flowers representing the

fame of these monkeys and bears to all corners of the world of that time, and also make them immortal in the annals of history in the future.]

Verse no. 50:

अथ तस्य विशाम्पत्युरन्ते कामस्य कर्मणः।

पुरुषः प्रबभूवाग्नेर्विस्मयेन सहर्त्विजाम्॥ १०-५०

atha tasya viśāmpatyurante kāmasya karmaṇaḥ।
puruṣaḥ prababhūvāgnervismayena sahartvijām || 10-50

10-50. Meanwhile, almost at the same time, the son-begetting fire sacrifice being conducted by king Dashrath neared completion. And in its final hour, a divine form representing the fire-god appeared from the sacrificial pit. His form was so magnificent and divine that everyone who beheld it, including the priests who were conducting the fire sacrifice rituals, were awed and astonished.

Verse no. 51:

हेमपात्रगतम् दोर्भ्यामादधानः पयश्चरुम्।

अनुप्रवेशादाद्यस्य पुम्सस्तेनापि दुर्वहम्॥ १०-५१

hemapātragatam dorbhyāmādhānaḥ payas̥carum।
anupraveśādādyasya pumsastenāpi durvahaṁ || 10-51

10-51. That divine Being (the fire-god) held a small golden pot (a cup or a similar vessel) by both his hands. This pot was filled with a sweet pudding which contained the essence of Lord Vishnu in an invisible form.

The fire-god had to use both his hands to hold this pot because of the fact that it had Lord Vishnu's presence in it, albeit in a very subtle form (i.e. in an atomic form or microscopic form), and the Lord bears the whole world symbolically on his shoulders, thereby making the pot containing the pudding heavier than usual.

Verse no. 52:

प्राजापत्योपनीतम् तदन्नम् प्रत्यग्रहीन्नृपः।

वृषेव पयसाम् सारमाविष्कृतमुदन्वता॥ १०-५२

prājāpatyopanītam tadannam pratyagrahīnnṛpaḥ।
vṛṣeva payasām sāramāviṣkṛtamudanvatā || 10-52

10-52. Just like Indra, the king of gods, had accepted the pot of Amrit (ambrosia of eternity) when the deity of the ocean had revealed himself and offered it to Indra (during the event of the 'churning of the ocean' in some ancient era), so likewise king Dashrath too accepted the pot containing the blessed liquid cheerfully from the divine form representing the fire-god.

Verse no. 53:

अनेन कथिता राज्ञो गुणास्तस्यान्यदुर्लभाः।
प्रसूतिम् चकमे तस्मिन्त्रैलोक्यप्रभवोऽपि यत्॥ १०-५३

anena kathitā rājño guṇāstasyānyadurlabhāḥ।
prasūtim cakame tasmimstrailokyaprabhavo'pi yat || 10-53

10-53. That divine Being praised king Dashrath and his many virtues so lavishly that Lord Vishnu, who was hearing all this while residing imperceptibly in a microscopic form in the blessed pudding that the divine Being had offered to the king, felt glad at his decision of choosing king Dashrath's household to manifest himself.

Verse no. 54:

स तेजो वैष्णवम् पत्न्योर्विभजे चरुसम्जितम्।
द्यावापृथिव्योः प्रत्यग्रमहर्षतिरिवातपम्॥ १०-५४

sa tejo vaiṣṇavam patnyorvibheje carusamjñitam।
dyāvāpṛthivyoḥ pratyagramaharpatirivātapam || 10-54

10-54. Just like the case of the sun distributing its rays evenly between the sky and the earth in the morning hours (thereby lighting both the sky and the earth at the same time), so in like manner king Dashrath distributed that blessed pudding equally between his two queens, Kaushalya and Kaikeyi.

Verse no. 55:

अर्चिता तस्य कौसल्या प्रिया केकयवम्शजा।
अतः सम्भाविताम् ताभ्याम् सुमित्रामैच्छदीश्वरः॥ १०-५५

arcitā tasya kausalyā priyā kekayavamśajā।
ataḥ sambhāvitām tābhyām sumitrāmaicchadīśvaraḥ || 10-55

10-55. Kaushalya was king Dashrath's senior queen, and Kaikeyi was his favourite. That is why the king gave each of them equal half of the sweet pudding. But he also desired that his third queen Sumitra should also get some share, so he hinted to those who received the blessed pudding to share a part of their own portion to Sumitra to please her. {This will obviously ensure goodwill amongst these three chief queens. Further, Sumitra would be personally obliged to both Kaushalya and Kaikeyi for sharing with her their own share.}

Verse no. 56:

ते बहुज्ञस्य चित्तज्ञे पत्नौ पत्युर्महीक्षितः।
चरोरर्धार्धभागाभ्याम् तामयोजयतामुभे॥ १०-५६

te bahujñasya cittajñe patnau patyurmahīkṣitaḥ।
carorardhārdhabhāgābhyām tāmajayatatāmubhe || 10-56

10-56. The two queens, who were fortunate to receive one half of the blessed pudding, could sense king Dashrath's desire (as hinted in verse no. 55 herein above), so they cheerfully gave half of their own portion to Sumitra to make her feel happy.

{Hence, Sumitra actually got two quarters or one half of the entire pudding in two parts, because Kaushalya divided her share into two, which meant one quarter of the entire pudding, and similarly Kaikeyi too divided her own share into two equal parts, which meant another quarter of the whole pudding. Then they gave Sumitra these two parts individually, which when added together amounted to one half of the entire volume of the pudding.}

Verse no. 57:

सा हि प्रणयवत्यासीत्सपत्न्योरुभयोरपि।
भ्रमरी वारणस्येव मदनिस्सन्दरेखयोः॥ १०-५७

sā hi praṇayavatyāsītsapatnyorubhayorapi।
bhramarī vāraṇasyeva madanisyandarekhayoḥ || 10-57

10-57. Just as the female bee (bhramarī) loves to drink the viscous, mucous-like secretion from the temples of mature elephants in a rut, so did Sumitra also develop a bond of affection with her partner queens (Kaushalya and Kaikeyi) after they willingly shared their own portion of the son-begetting divine liquid with her.

Verse no. 58:

ताभिर्गर्भः प्रजाभूत्यै दध्रे देवांश्शसम्भवः।
सौरीभिरिव नाडीभिरमृताख्याभिरम्मयः॥ १०-५८

tābhīrgarbhāḥ prajābhūtyai dadhre devāṁśśasambhavaḥ।
saurībhiriva nāḍībhiramṛtākhyābhirammayaḥ || 10-58

10-58. Just like the case of the sunrays being instrumental in evaporating water molecules from the oceans and the seas in an imperceptible way, and then turning these water molecules into clouds that finally shower the same water in abundance in a visible form on earth to spread cheer on it, likewise Lord Vishnu entered the womb of these queens in an imperceptible way to cheer up the world when he would finally reveals himself in the form of four brothers.

[Note--This verse clearly implies that all the four brothers, i.e. Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were the same divine Being in different forms and playing

different roles just as the case of the same water falling down on earth in the form of rain at different places, on different occasions, and at different points of time of the year. Depending on the season and time of the year, the rain is assigned different names--such as summer time rain, winter time rain, autumnal rain, spring time rain etc. Essentially, rain water is the same.

When the sunrays evaporate water from the oceans and the seas, no one can see it happen. Then this water accumulates and forms clouds in the sky, but still no one can see water in the cloud. Then, when the ripe time comes, the clouds shower this accumulated water as rain. Everyone can see the cloud and the rain falling from it, but no one can see the water evaporating with the help of the sun's hot rays and the formation of the cloud in the sky.

Likewise, no one could see the presence of Lord Vishnu in a subtle form within the pudding, which is here likened to the cloud, but the Lord's presence was known only when the four brothers took birth just like the presence of water in the cloud is revealed when the water falls from it as rain.]

Verse no. 59:

सममापन्नसत्त्वास्ता रेजुरापाण्डुरत्विषः।

अन्तर्गतफलारम्भाः सस्यानामिव सम्पदः॥ १०-५९

samamāpannasattvāstā rejurāpāṇḍuratviṣaḥ।

antargataphalārambhāḥ sasyānāmiva sampadaḥ || 10-59

10-59. All these three queens conceived at the same time. When they became pregnant, their complexion became pale with a radiant yellow tinge. They resembled stalks of food grains, such as wheat, in which the seed of the grain is slowly maturing. {Such stalks have a yellowish colour.}

Verse no. 60:

गुप्तम् ददृशुरात्मानम् सर्वाः स्वप्नेषु वामनैः।

जलजासिकदाशाङ्गचक्रलाञ्छितमूर्तिभिः॥ १०-६०

guptam dadṛśurātmānam sarvāḥ svapneṣu vāmanaiḥ।

jalajāsīkadāśāṅgacakralāñchitamūrtibhiḥ || 10-60

10-60. {From this verse no. 60 to the end of verse no. 63, the various dreams of the queens are narrated.}

The three queens saw a dream in which they saw that a dwarf was protecting them. This dwarf held a conch, sword, mace, and a discus, with a bow named Sharanga slung on his shoulder.

{Since the queens had eaten the divine pudding that contained the essence of Lord Vishnu, the dream meant that the dwarf they saw was none other than Lord Vishnu.}

Verse no. 61:

हेमपक्षप्रभाजालम् गगने च वितन्वता।
उह्यन्ते स्म सुपर्णेन वेगाकृष्टपयोमुचा॥ १०-६१

hemapakṣaprabhājālam gagane ca vitanvatā।
uhyante sma suparṇena vegākṛṣṭapayomucā || 10-61

10-61. In their dreams the queens also saw a magnificent giant bird, like the Garud, the celestial eagle which is the mount of Lord Vishnu, carrying them aloft on its huge golden wings that it had spread wide on both of its sides as it flew through the firmament, scattering the clouds owing to its high speed.

Verse no. 62:

बिभ्रत्या कौस्तुभन्यासम् स्तनान्तरविलम्बितम्।
पर्युपास्यन्त लक्ष्म्या च पद्मव्यजनहस्तया॥ १०-६२

bibhratyā kaustubhanyāsam stanāntaravilambitam।
paryupāsyanta lakṣmyā ca padmavyajanahastayā || 10-62

10-62. They further saw that goddess Laxmi (who would be their future daughter-in-law in the form of Sita), who was wearing a resplendent necklace chain around her neck with a pendant studded with the Kaustav Mani (jewel), which Lord Vishnu had given to her for keepsake and as a piece of jewellery for the purpose of identification¹, was fanning them with hand-held lotus as is a usual practice for a daughter-in-law who stands in the service of her mother-in-law.

[Note--¹While coming down to earth in an embryonic form to enter the wombs of the three queens, Lord Vishnu had kept the Kaustav jewel with Laxmi as a trust. It was not practically feasible for Lord Vishnu to continue to wear the hard jewel as a pendant when he entered the wombs of the three queens as it would have torn their innards to shred.

The 'Kaustav Mani' is a jewel that was obtained from the ocean at the time of its churning in some ancient time by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity. Its a special jewel that is one of its kind and worn exclusively by Lord Vishnu.]

Verse no. 63:

कृताभिषेकैर्दिव्यायाम् त्रिस्रोतसि च सप्तभिः।
ब्रह्मर्षिभिः परम् ब्रह्म गृणद्भिरुपतस्थिरे॥ १०-६३

kṛtābhiṣekairdivyāyām trisrotasi ca saptabhiḥ।
brahmarṣibhiḥ param brahma gṛṇadbhirupatasthire || 10-63

10-63. Not only this, the queens also observed that great sages led by Kashyap, after having taken a ritualistic bath in the celestial river called 'Akash Ganga' representing the original stream of the holy river Ganges that flows through the heaven, were chanting Vedic hymns while worshipping the Supreme Lord (Vishnu) who presently resided in their wombs in an embryonic form.

{These sages faced the queens and offered their obeisance to them because they held the queens in high esteem as Lord Vishnu himself dwelt in their wombs in an embryonic form. When these sages stood facing the queens and offered their worship to the latter, it was not the queens whom these sages actually worshipped, but the Supreme Lord who lived inside their wombs whom they were offering their obeisance. It can also be interpreted as meaning that the sages were honouring the queens to show great respect to them as they were exceptionally fortunate and blessed to have Lord Vishnu as their future son.}

Verse no. 64:

**ताभ्यस्तथाविधान्स्वप्नाञ्छ्रुत्वा प्रीतो हि पार्थिवः।
मेने परार्द्धमात्मानम् गुरुत्वेन जगद्गुरोः॥ १०-६४**

tābhyastathāvidhānsvapnāñchrutvā prīto hi pārthivah।
mene parārdhyamātmānam gurutvena jagadguroḥ || 10-64

10-64. When the queens shared their dreams with king Dashrath, he felt exceedingly happy and gratified as he instantly realised how fortunate and blessed he was that he would soon be becoming the worldly father of Lord Vishnu who was the Lord of the creation. No other human being on this earth has had this rarest of rare privilege. This thought sent thrill through king Dashrath.

Verse no. 65:

**विभक्त आत्मा विभुस्तासामेकः कुक्षिष्वनेकधा।
उवास प्रतिमाचन्द्रः प्रसन्नानामपामिव॥ १०-६५**

vibhakta ātmā vibhustāsāmekah। kukṣiṣvanekadhā।
uvāsa pratimācandraḥ prasannānāmapāmiva || 10-65

10-65. Even as the same moon is seen in multiple forms when it is reflected in the calm waters of multiple vessels, so did the same and immutable Lord Vishnu appeared separately in the wombs of the three queens.

{All the three queens had the same essence of Lord Vishnu growing in their wombs. Though from worldly perspective all these embryos were different, growing separately in three different wombs, yet since their essence was the same, they had the same gene and the same DNA as that of Lord Vishnu. It was like viewing the same moon through its clear reflection in three different vessels containing calm and undisturbed water.}

Verse no. 66:

अथाग्र्यमहिषी राज्ञः प्रसूतिसमये सती।

पुत्रम् तमोऽपहम् लेभे नक्तम् ज्योतिरिवौषधिः॥ १०-६६

athāgryamahīṣī rājñāḥ prasūtisamaye satī

putram tamo'paham lebhe naktam jyotirivaṣadhiḥ || 10-66

10-66. In due course of time when the pregnancy matured and the time of delivery arrived (in the tenth month since conception), the chaste and the senior-most queen of king Dashrath delivered an auspicious son (who would be named Lord Ram later on) having a halo of light of divinity around him which dispelled darkness of negativity just like a certain kind of herb that emanates light in the darkness of the night¹, thereby removing darkness and marking its presence by illuminating its surroundings.

[Note--¹There are many plants that glow in the night due to the presence of certain bio-luminescent substances in them. They are fluorescent plants emitting a glow. Similarly, there are certain bio-luminescent mushroom too.

Some of these self-glowing plants are the following--Firefly Petunia (farfugium japonicum) which emits a neon-green light from its flowers and leaves, Moonflower (Ipomoea alba), Night Phlox (zaluzyanskya capensis), Evening Primrose (oenothera biennis), and Jack-o-lantern Mushroom.]

Verse no. 67:

राम इत्यभिरामेण वपुषा तस्य चोदितः।

नामधेयम् गुरुश्चक्रे जगत्प्रथममङ्गलम्॥ १०-६७

rāma ityabhirāmeṇa vapuṣā tasya coditaḥ

nāmadheyam guruścakre jagatprathamamaṅgalam || 10-67

10-67. Moved by the exceptional charm and attractive features of that child, his father king Dashrath rejoiced. He named the auspicious child 'Ram' which symbolically meant the 'charmer who would grant auspiciousness and blessing to the whole world'.

Verse no. 68:

रघुवम्शप्रदीपेन तेनाप्रतिमतेजसा।

रक्षागृहगता दीपाः प्रत्यादिष्टा इवाभवन्॥ १०-६८

raghuvamśapradīpena tenāpratimatejasā

rakṣāgṛhagatā dīpāḥ pratyādiṣṭā ivābhavan || 10-68

10-68. The incomparable radiance and the divine halo of that new-born child named Ram, who was like the beacon light of the dynasty of king Raghu, dimmed the light emanating from the crystal lamps present in the room.

Verse no. 69:

शय्यागतेन रामेण माता शातोदरी बभौ।

सैकताम्भोजबलिना जाह्नवीव शरत्कृशा॥ १०-६९

śayyāgatena rāmeṇa mātā śātodarī babhau।
saikatāmbhojabalinā jāhnavīva śaratkr̥ṣā || 10-69

10-69. Mother Kaushalya, lying on the bed with a slender belly after delivering the child Ram who lay by her side, looked like a thin stream of river Ganges during the autumn season with a blue lotus flower offered to the river lying on its sandy banks.

[Note--In this verse, mother Kaushalya is likened to river Ganges as seen in the autumn season when the river shrinks into a thin stream as opposed to its swollen form full of water during the rainy season, and the child Ram lying by her side is compared to the lotus flower that lies on the bank of the river after a devotee had offered it to the holy river after paying respect to it.

After delivery of the child, the mother's belly shrank to its original size. The soft bed is likened to the sandy bank of the river Ganges.]

Verse no. 70:

कैकेय्यास्तनयो जज्ञे भरतो नाम शीलवान्।

जनयित्रीमलम्वचक्रे यः प्रश्रय इव श्रियम्॥ १०-७०

kaikeyyāstanayo jajñe bharato nāma śīlavān।
janayitrīmalamvacakre yaḥ praśraya iva śriyam || 10-70

10-70. A virtuous son named Bharat was born to mother Kaikeyi. He glorified his mother just like the virtue of modesty is an adornment of prosperity.

[Note--Though Bharat was a treasury of excellent characters, he was modest, quiet and virtuous. Bharat was not pretentious and haughty. He was like a good gentleman who, though blessed with immense prosperity and immeasurable wealth, maintains modesty and humility, never flaunting his wealth and boasting around about it. Goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity, feels proud of such a man who never flaunts his riches but thinks that whatever he has is a blessing of the Lord, making him humble and polite. Bharat was like this gentleman. And obviously a mother who has such a virtuous son would be very happy and proud of him as he brings glory to her too.]

Verse no. 71:

सुतौ लक्ष्मणशत्रुघ्नौ सुमित्रा सुषुवे यमौ।

सम्यगाराधिता विद्या प्रबोधविनयाविव॥ १०-७१

sutau lakṣmaṇaśatrughnau sumitrā suṣuve yamau।
samyagārādhitā vidyā prabodhavinayāviva || 10-71

10-71. Mother Sumitra, meanwhile, gave birth to two sons named Laxman and Shatrughan. These two sons too had excellent characters and brought glory to their mother. These two sons were self-controlled, wise and polite just as acquisition of deep knowledge and the virtue of erudition makes a person learned and sagacious, which in turn makes him calm and sage-like.

Verse no. 72:

**निर्दोषमभवत्सर्वमाविष्कृतगुणम् जगत्।
अन्वगादिव हि स्वर्गो गाम् गतम् पुरुषोत्तमम्॥ १०-७२**

nirdoṣamabhavatsarvamāviṣkṛtaguṇam jagat।
anvagādiva hi svargo gām gatam puruṣottamam || 10-72

10-72. With the advent of these four sons who represented Lord Vishnu, the world was so much the richer with the virtue of auspiciousness. The negativity in the world declined, and positive characters became ascendant. Resentment, animosity and misery declined, and happiness, joy, brotherhood and contentment rose.

Verse no. 73:

**तस्योदये चतुर्मूर्तेः पौलस्त्यचकितेश्वराः।
विरजस्कैर्नभस्वद्भिर्दिश उच्छवसिता इव॥ १०-७३**

tasyodaye caturmūrteḥ paulastyacakiteśvarāḥ।
virajaskairnabhasvadbhirdīśa ucchvasitā iva || 10-73

10-73. A clean wind free from dust began blowing over all the quarters of the earth symbolising the freedom with which all the guardians of the mortal world who could now breathe freely, without the fear of the descendants of Pulastya (i.e. the demon king Ravana and his kin), after the Lord of the world descended on earth in the form of Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan to protect them.

Verse no. 74:

**कृशानुरपधूमत्वात्प्रसन्नत्वात्प्रभाकरः।
रक्षोविप्रकृतावास्तामपविद्धशुचाविव॥ १०-७४**

kr̥śānurapadhūmatvātpṛasannatvātpṛabhākaraḥ।
rakṣoviprakṛtāvāstāmapavidḍhaśucāviva || 10-74

10-74. The heavenly Sun-god and the Fire-god were constantly afraid of Ravana as symbolised by the dullness in their light. But they now exhibited their happiness at the birth of their protector (Lord Vishnu in the form of the four brothers) by shining with a brilliant light that dazzled the beholder.

Verse no. 75:

दशाननकिरीटेभ्यस्तत्क्षणम् राक्षसश्रियः।
मणिव्याजेन पर्यस्ताः पृथिव्यामश्रुबिन्दवः॥ १०-७५

daśānanakirīṭebhyastatkṣaṇam rākṣasaśriyaḥ।
maṇivyājena paryastāḥ pṛthivyāmaśrubindavaḥ || 10-75

10-75. During those moments when Lord Ram and his brothers were born, some gems from the crown of the demon king Ravana got dislodged and fell to the ground as if the patron deity, who had been protecting the demon king for so long, was shedding tears.

[Note--This falling of the gems from his crown, without any visible cause, was a very bad omen for Ravana. It signified that his crown, symbolising his power and authority, was in grave danger. In this analogy, these falling of gems resembled tears rolling down from the eyes of the patron deity of Lanka who was protecting Ravana till now, as she now wept and lamented at his doomed fate.]

Verse no. 76:

पुत्रजन्मप्रवेश्यानाम् तूर्याणाम् तस्य पुत्रिणः।
आरम्भम् प्रथमम् चक्रुर्देवदुन्दुभयो दिवि॥ १०-७६

putrajanmapraveśyānām tūryāṇām tasya putriṇaḥ।
ārambham prathamam cakrurdevadundubhaya divi || 10-76

10-76. Even before king Dashrath could order playing of drums and other musical instruments to celebrate the birth of his four sons, the gods in the heaven had already started rejoicing and playing pipes, drums and trumpets in heaven to express their joy and happiness at the advent of Lord Vishnu, their protector, on earth to save them from the constant torments they had been subjected to by Ravana.

Verse no. 77:

सन्तानकमयी वृष्टिर्भवने चास्य पेतुषी।
सन्मङ्गलोपचाराणाम् सैवादिरचनाऽभवत्॥ १०-७७

santānakamayī vṛṣṭirbhavane cāsyā petuṣī।
sanmaṅgalopacārāṇām saivādiracanā'bhavat || 10-77

10-77. A shower of flowers of the evergreen tree called Kalpa Tree rained down on king Dashrath's palace from the heaven, marking the beginning of the elaborate celebrations and religious rituals that commenced to commemorate the auspicious occasion of the birth the four charming princes as heirs of the king.

Verse no. 78:

कुमाराः कृतसम्स्कारास्ते धात्रीस्तन्यपायिनः।
आनन्देनाग्रजेनेव समम् ववृधिरे पितुः॥ १०-७८

kumārāḥ kṛtasamskāraṣte dhātrīstanyapāyinaḥ।
ānandenāgrajeneva samam vavṛdhire pituḥ || 10-78

10-78. King Dashrath was extremely exhilarated at the birth of the four princes (as now he was freed from the curse of being childless, and hence having no one to become his heir and inherit his kingdom). The various religious rituals were conducted with great ceremony and pomp even as the joy of the king went on increasing day-by-day in the same proportion as the growth of the eldest son (i.e. Lord Ram) along with his three other siblings who began to grow up by sucking milk from the breast of their nurses¹ (dhātrīstanyapāyinaḥ).

[Note--¹This verse explicitly states that the four brothers had sucked milk from the breast of their respective nurses instead of their mothers as is the norm.]

Verse no. 79:

स्वाभाविकम् विनीतत्वम् तेषाम् विनयकर्मणा।
मुमूर्च्छ सहजम् तेजो हविषेव हविर्भुजाम्॥ १०-७९

svābhāvikam vinītatvam teṣām vinayakarmanā।
mumūrccha sahajam tejo haviṣeva havirbhujām || 10-79

10-79. Just as the flames of fire are augmented by addition of clarified butter and other combustible material into the fire pit, Lord Ram and his siblings' excellent natural qualities such as humility and other good characters began to shine and come to the fore as they gradually grew up and acquired good education and training (under the guidance of their teacher, sage Vashistha)¹ that made them rich with knowledge, erudition and wisdom.

[Note--Lord Ram and his three brothers were taught by sage Vashistha, the chief priest and moral preceptor of the rulers of Ayodhya--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 204.]

Verse no. 80:

परस्परविरुद्धास्ते तद्रगोरनघम् कुलम्।
अलमुद्योतयामासुर्देवारण्यमिवर्तवः॥ १०-८०

parasparaviruddhāste tadragoranagham kulam।
alamudyotayāmāsurdēvāraṇyamivartavaḥ || 10-80

10-80. Just as wind of the different seasons, though of varying kinds, spread the fragrance of the sandalwood tree uniformly in the celestial garden, so likewise the mutual love and affection of the four brothers as well as their brotherliness enhanced the glory of the family to which they belonged, i.e. dynasty of king Raghu.

[Note--The idea is that though the four brothers had varying qualities, nature and characteristics at the individual level, yet they never quarrelled or spoke against each other. They lived friendly and amiably. They ate together, played together, slept together, studied together, and grew up together. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 10.]

Verse no. 81:

**समानेऽपि च सौभ्रात्रे यथेभौ रामलक्ष्मणौ।
तथा भरतशत्रुघ्नौ प्रीत्या द्वन्द्वम् बभूवतुः॥ १०-८१**

samāne'pi ca saubhrātre yathebhou rāmalakṣmaṇau |
tathā bharataśatrughnau prītyā dvandvam babhūvatuḥ || 10-81

10-81. Though there was unequivocal brotherly affection between all the four brothers, yet some unique affinity and an underlying sense of mutual attachment and respect, coupled with a bond of love and affection for each other, paired the four brothers into two groups, one such pair being that of Lord Ram and Laxman, and the other being that of Bharat and Shatrughan.

Verse no. 82:

**तेषाम् द्वयोर्द्वयोरैक्यम् बिभिदे न कदाचन।
यथा वायुर्विभावस्त्वोर्यथा चन्द्रसमुद्रयोः॥ १०-८२**

teṣām dvayordvayoraikyam bibhide na kadācana |
yathā vāyurvibhāvasvoryathā candrasamudrayoḥ || 10-82

10-82. The unity and bond of love and affection between the brothers of a group were solid and unbreakable, while at the same time, the two groups too shared a mutual bond of affection between them. The bond and relationship between the two brothers of a group was like that of the wind or air and fire, or between the moon and the sea¹.

{Though the two brothers of a group had developed special affinity for each other, it did not mean that it effected the mutual brotherliness and love that existed between all the four brothers in the general way. Like two teams playing a game, with each team having two members, the four brothers formed two groups that stood with each other, shoulder-to-shoulder when the need arose, yet when left alone, the members of one group had the tendency to stick with each other more closely most of the time. To wit, Laxman and Lord Ram preferred to stay together, and Bharat and Shatrughan did likewise.}

[Note--¹The fire and air share a special bond as the latter keeps the former lighted. Strong gust of wind would normally blow out the fire, but another form of it as the 'air' is also needed to keep the fire lighted. Similarly, the water of the sea rises during the night of the full moon, showing the affinity that exists between the sea and the full moon. The same sea won't rise under the sun, but it would under the light of the full moon.

Thus, for example, Lord Ram felt very happy in the company of Laxman, and vice-versa. Similarly, Bharat felt happy with Shatrughan by his side, and vice-versa.]

Verse no. 83:

ते प्रजानाम् प्रजानाथास्तेजसा प्रश्रयेण च।
मनो जहुर्निदाघान्ते श्यामाभा दिवसा इव॥ १०-८३

te prajānām prajānāthāstejasā praśrayeṇa ca।
mano jahurnidāghānte śyāmābhā divasā iva || 10-83

10-83. Just as rain-bearing clouds at the end of the scorching days of summer enamour the minds of the people, so did the four princes endeared themselves to the mind and heart of the subjects of the kingdom with their amiable nature, excellent characters, and polite and friendly behaviour.

[Note--After the hot tormenting days of summer, people yearn to see the rain-bearing clouds which would shower the much-wanted and much-awaited rain to cool the land and provide succour and joy to the thirsty populace. Similarly, by their friendly nature, polite demeanours, good characters and humility, the four young princes captured the mind and the heart of the citizens of Ayodhya. This situation can be compared with that when the princes might have been rude and reckless, as when they grow up to become kings, the citizens would have to suffer a lot. Hence, all the subjects of the kingdom thanked their good fortune and rejoiced at their favourable fate to have their future kings so nice and friendly.]

Verse no. 84:

स चतुर्धा बभौ व्यस्तः प्रसवः पृथिवीपतेः।
धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाणामवतार इवाङ्गवान्॥ १०-८४

sa caturdhā babhau vyastah prasavaḥ pṛthivīpateḥ।
dharmārthakāmamokṣāṇāmavatāra ivāṅgavān || 10-84

10-84. The four auspicious sons of king Dashrath were so good and endowed with such excellent virtues that they were like the personified forms of the four great rewards of Dharma, Artha, Kaam and Moksha¹ which accrue as blessings to a noble and righteous person who does his duties diligently and in a righteous manner.

[Note--¹The four rewards or blessings of leading a good life and doing one's duty diligently are the following: (i) Dharma--auspiciousness as well as an aura of holiness

and piety that invite all-round honour and respect; (ii) Artha--financial well-being, prosperity; (iii) Kaam--fulfilment of all desires; and (iv) Moksha--freedom from the cycle of transmigration.]

Verse no. 85:

गुणैराराधयामासुस्ते गुरुम् गुरुवत्सलाः।
तमेव चतुरन्तेशम् रत्नैरिव महार्णवाः॥ १०-८५

guṇairārādhayāmāsuste gurum guruvatsalāḥ।
tameva caturanteśam ratnairiva mahārṇavāḥ || 10-85

10-85. Just like the oceans of all the four quarters of the earth had honoured the noble king Dashrath by offering their jewels to him to please him, so did the excellent virtues and stellar characters of the four noble princes made their father Dashrath feel very happy and fortunate. {King Dashrath felt gratified to have such good sons who were no less than jewels in their own right because of their immaculate nature, goodness, characters, virtues, intelligence, discipline, amiable nature, and friendly disposition.}

Verse no. 86:

सुरगज इव दन्तैर्भग्नदैत्यासिधारैर्नय इव पणबन्धव्यक्तयोगैरुपायैः।
हरिरिव युगदीर्घदर्पोर्भिरम्शैस्तदीयैः पतिरवनिपतीनाम् तैश्चकाशे चतुर्भिः॥ १०-८६

suragaja iva dantairbhagnadaityāsidhārai rnaya iva
paṇabandhavyaktayogairupāyaiḥ।
haririva yugadīrghadordorbhiraṁśaistadiyaiḥ patiravanipatīnām taiścakāśe
caturbhiḥ || 10-86

10-86. Just like the heavenly elephant named Erawat (the mount of Indra, the king of gods) stood honoured after having blunted the sword of the demons with its four mighty tusks (during the legendary battle between the gods and the demons), just like political science has four branches called Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda¹ which enables its practitioner to attain victory over his adversaries, and just like Lord Vishnu looks glorious with his four arms which are as long as the crossbars of a chariot--so likewise the fortunate king Dashrath looked glorious and majestic as well as worthy of praise and honour with his four noble sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) by his side.

[Note--¹Political science advocates the use of four methods to gain an upper hand over one's political opponent and obtain desired result. These four methods are the following: (i) Sam (pronounced 'Saam')--meaning a conciliatory approach; (ii) Daan--meaning giving aid and financial support as an indirect method of bribery; (iii) Danda--meaning punishment and punitive action; and (iv) Bhed--meaning causing dissention and friction between two adversaries, and then quietly supporting one over the other.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवम्श महाकाव्ये दशमः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye daśamaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends this 10th chapter of Kalidasa's Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Chapter (Sarga) 11, verse nos. 1-93:

Introduction:

One day, sage Vishwamitra came to the court of king Dashrath and requested him to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him to protect his fire sacrifice that was being constantly defiled by demons. Though the king was initially very reluctant in sending his beloved young son with the sage as he had been blessed with sons in his ripe old age after severe penance, yet he did not want to refuse the sage and invite his anger, as that would be devastating for all his family. Further, the king knew about the spiritual powers of the sage and his stupendous abilities, which ensured that no harm could ever come to Lord Ram under any circumstances under the protection of sage Vishwamitra.

At the instruction of their father, the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, picked up their bows and followed sage Vishwamitra. The king did not send his army with the two princes to help and protect them, as he was sure that the sage's mystical powers and blessings were enough to ensure that no harm would come to his two sons.

The two young princes had never stepped out of their palace till now, so to help them overcome tiredness and prepare for the job at hand (which was to defeat the demons and protect the fire sacrifice, as well as be ready to face countless hurdles in life and emerge victorious), the sage taught them two mystical sciences known as Balaa and Ati-balaa by the virtue of which knowledge they neither felt tired, nor felt hungry or thirsty.

All the sages, hermits and ascetics who lived on the way in pleasant hermitages that had ponds with blooming lotus flowers and green trees with rich foliage that provided cool shade, felt so happy when they met Lord Ram and Laxman that even the charming natural environment of their hermitages had never given so much satisfaction to them till now.

On the way, they met the ferocious demoness named Tadka, the daughter of Suketu. She had devastated all the surrounding hermitages with her attacks. Sage Vishwamitra had already told Lord Ram and Laxman about her, so as soon as the two brothers saw her, they strung their bows, and pulled the strings by resting one end of the bows on the ground. The thunderous sound emanating from the bows annoyed Tadka who came and stood before them, blocking their way. She had a fearsome dark complexion like that of a dark night when no moon is visible. She yelled menacingly and lunged forward to attack Lord Ram. Overcoming his initial hesitation of shooting at a woman, as the Lord Ram realised that she was a sinful and flesh eating creature who showed no mercy to anyone, and sparing her would invite trouble for him, his younger brother Laxman as well as sage Vishwamitra, the Lord shot a single arrow that tore through Tadka's heart and she fell down. Almost at the same time as her death, the deity that had been protecting the demon king Ravana too shivered out of

fear and the prospect of an impending calamity that loomed on the horizon for the demon race.

The slaying of Tadka mightily pleased sage Vishwamitra who now realised that Lord Ram was indeed capable of protecting the world against the scourge of the demons, and therefore the sage gave Lord Ram all the mystical weapons he had, weapons that were needed to eliminate the demons, along with the knowledge regarding their use.

By-and-by, when they reached the sage's hermitage, Lord Ram slayed many great demons (led by Subahu). Lord Ram was such an expert in use of weapons that when the demon army attacked him, he mounted a special arrow known as Vayabya Astra and flung Marich, the son of Tadka, to a far away island, while slaying his brother named Subahu along with his army.

This remarkable feat astonished all the sages who lived in that hermitage. Sage Vishwamitra, meanwhile, successfully completed his fire sacrifice and blessed the two brothers by affectionately putting the palms of his hands on their head.

Almost at the same time as these developments, king Janak, the father of Sita, had organised an elaborate 'Dhanush Yagya' (a ceremony revolving around an ancient bow lying with him). The king had invited all great kings as well as all the great sages of the time to come to attend the ceremony. When the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, came to know about it, they were very curious, and showed interest to witness it. Seeing their enthusiasm, the sage took them along to witness this spectacle in Janakpur.

Evening fell, and so the three, i.e. sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman, stayed for the night under the shade of a tree in a desolate hermitage where sage Gautam's wife Ahilya had been turned into a stone by some curse. Encouraged by sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram touched that stone with his foot, and instantly the curse vanished and the lifeless stone transformed into a pious lady with a charming countenance (i.e. into Ahilya).

When king Janak heard that the great sage Vishwamitra had come to visit him, he went forward and reverentially welcomed him along with the two brothers who were accompanying the sage. When the two princes entered the city of Janakpur, its citizens were mesmerised by their charm and instantly began to love them.

Sage Vishwamitra then told king Janak that the two princes wished to see the 'bow' which was at the core of the bow ceremony known as the 'Dhanush Yagya'. This ceremony was organised by Sita's father to search for a groom for her. His condition was anyone who was strong and able enough to lift and string the bow would become eligible to wed his daughter Sita. The ceremony had been going on for some days now, yet none of the participating princes and kings could lift the bow, let alone string it.

So, when Janak learnt that Lord Ram wished to have a look at this mysterious bow, he (Janak) was taken aback. He was so much impressed by Lord Ram's personality and charm that he regretted why he had laid the aforesaid condition for Sita's marriage, for had he known about Lord Ram earlier he would have married his daughter to him without a second thought.

Observing Janak's dilemma, the sage told him that the king need not have any regrets as all his conditions would be met by Lord Ram who had the competence to lift and string the bow. The Lord's stupendous abilities and astounding strength would come to the fore only when he is put to test just like the case of the strength of Vajra (the hard weapon of Indra; the thunderbolt) is judged when it strikes the side of a mountain, rupturing it and dislodging its rocks. A spark from the fire and even a small

Mantra (mystical formula) have great potentials, as this tiny spark can cause a massive blaze, and the short Mantra can invoke heavenly powers that can supersede all worldly powers.

Thence, king Janak escorted them to the place where the bow was kept ready for anyone to come and test his might against it. Even as everyone watched in stunned amazement, Lord Ram instantly lifted the wondrous bow, strung it and pulled the string back to such an extent that the bow itself broke into two halves with a mighty roar. As soon as this happened, Sita put the victory garland around Lord Ram's neck.

Exhilarated Janak sent an invitation to king Dashrath to come to Janakpur with the marriage party. King Dashrath was thrilled with happiness, and he quickly made preparation and headed to Janakpur with a large party. The two great kings embraced each other most affectionately, and married all the four sons of Dashrath with four daughters of king Janak's family with great celebrations, observing all religious rites, traditional customs and elaborate ceremonies.

While the grooms' party was heading home to Ayodhya, the great sage Parashuram intervened on the way as he was angry that the bow of his revered Lord Shiva had been broken by Lord Ram. But the Lord's divine charm calmed down the angry sage who handed over his own weapon, the battle-axe, to the Lord and politely went back to his hermitage.

Finally, the party reached Ayodhya with the newly wed princes and their wives amidst great rejoicing and ceremony. The citizens poured out on the streets in large numbers to have a glimpse of the four princes along with their respective wives.

This part of the story of the Ramayana has been narrated in great detail in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 355.

With this background information, now let us proceed with reading this chapter no. 11 from Raghuvansham that follows herein below:

Verse no. 1:

कौशिकेन स किल क्षितीश्वरो राममध्वरविघातशान्तये।

काकपक्षधरमेत्य याचितः तेजसाम् हि न वयः समीक्ष्यते॥ ११-१

kauśikena sa kila kṣitīśvaro rāmamadhvaravighātaśāntaye |

kākapakṣadharametya yācitaḥ tejasām hi na vayaḥ samīkṣyate || 11-1

11-1. Now it so happened that one day sage Vishwamitra went to king Dashrath's court and requested him to spare his elder son Lord Ram, who was still a young boy with curly jet-black hairs adorning his temple and the sides of his ears, so that his (sage's) fire sacrifice could be protected from being constantly defiled by attacks of demons. The king agreed with the sage that this outrageous conduct of the demons was not pardonable, and it was his moral duty to do what he could to curb this nuisance and help the sages overcome their torment.

Verse no. 2:

कृच्छ्रलब्धमपि लब्धवर्णभाक् तम् दिदेश मुनये सलक्ष्मणम्।
अप्यसुप्रणयिनाम् रघोः कुले न व्यहन्यत कदाचिदर्थिता॥ ११-२

kr̥cchralabdhamapi labdhavarṇabhāk tam dideśa munaye salakṣmaṇam |
apyasupraṇayinām raghoḥ kule na vyahanyata kadācidarthitā || 11-2

11-2. Though initially king Dashrath was very reluctant to send Lord Ram away to face this danger, especially because he had got the four sons in his old age and after great difficulties, but on second thoughts he ultimately decided to send Lord Ram and Laxman with sage Vishwamitra as the king had great respect for great sages, and he was also aware of the sage's immense spiritual powers and potentials that were surely strong enough an insurance for the safety of his two sons.

There was another reason why the king agreed to give his two sons to the sage. It had been an established tradition of the kings of his lineage since ancient times that they never refuse to oblige anyone who is suffering and has come to the king seeking some kind of help him so much so that the king would even risk his own life for the fulfilment of this tradition. {One other reason was that the king feared that his refusal would enrage the sage, and there were fair chances that the sage might curse him for disobedience. This eventuality would be devastating for the whole family.}

Verse no. 3:

यावदादिशति पार्थिवस्तयोः निर्गमाय पुरमार्गसंस्क्रियाम्।
तावदाशु विदधे मरुत्सखैः सा सपुष्पजलवर्षिभिर्घनैः॥ ११-३

yāvadādiśati pārthivastayoḥ nirgamāya puramārgasaṁskriyām |
tāvadāśu vidadhe marutsakhaiḥ sā sapuṣṣajalavarṣibhirghanaiḥ || 11-3

11-3. King Dashrath ordered that the road leading out of the city on which the sage would go back to his hermitage with the two princes should be washed cleaned and properly decorated with flowers. But the gods decided that they would do this themselves to honour Lord Ram. So the wind-god blew breeze that swept all the dust out of the streets, the rain-god showered fragrant water to wash the streets, and the rest of the gods showered flowers to cover the streets and make it cushioned as if a red-carpet was spread out on the ground to honour Lord Ram and Laxman along with sage Vishwamitra.

Verse no. 4:

तौ निदेशकरणोद्यतौ पितुः धन्विनौ चरणयोर्निपेततुः।
भूपतेरपि तयोः प्रवत्स्यतोः नमयोरुपरि बाष्पबिन्दवः॥ ११-४

tau nideśakaraṇodyatau pituḥ dhanvinau caraṇayornipetatuḥ |
bhūpaterapi tayoh pravatsyatoḥ namayorupari bāṣpabindavaḥ || 11-4

11-4. Both Lord Ram and Laxman picked up their bows and quivers and came to bow before their father, expressing their willingness to obey his commands. Tears rolled

down from the eyes of an emotional king Dashrath and fell on the two brothers as they bent down to touch his feet and get his blessings before departure.

Verse no. 5:

तौ पितुर्नयनजेन वारिणा किञ्चिदुक्षितशिखण्डकावुभौ।
धन्विनौ तमृषिमन्वगच्छताम् पौरदृष्टिकृतमार्गतोरणौ॥ ११-५

tau piturnayanajena vāriṇā kiñcidukṣitaśikhaṇḍakāvubhau |
dhanvinau tamṛṣimanvagacchatām pauradr̥ṣṭikṛtamārgatoraṇau || 11-5

11-5. The tear drops that fell from the eyes of king Dashrath had wetted the lock of curled hairs on the temples and the sides of the ears of the two princes holding a bow each as they followed sage Vishwamitra. The citizens of Ayodhya came out in droves to say an emotional good-bye to them, and their affectionate glances from all sides resembled the buntings and festoons that were put up to honour the two princes as they passed through the streets.

[Note--The citizens lined the street and cheered. They held small colourful flags, flowers, and waved their hands as the two princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, accompanied sage Vishwamitra as they wended their way through the city's main street and headed to the sage's hermitage. It appeared that the street was lined by buntings and festoons.]

Verse no. 6:

लक्ष्मणानुचरमेव राघवम् नेतुमैच्छदृषिरित्यसौ नृपः।
आशिषम् प्रयुयुजे न वाहिनीम् सा हि रक्षणविधौ तयोः क्षमा॥ ११-६

lakṣmaṇānucarameva rāghavam netumaicchadr̥ṣirityasau nṛpaḥ |
āśiṣam prayuyuje na vāhinīm sā hi rakṣaṇavidhau tayoḥ kṣamā || 11-6

11-6. The king would normally have sent a detachment of his troops to accompany the two princes when they ventured out of the city for the purpose of their safety, but the king did not do so in deference to the venerable sage Vishwamitra's greatness as he was fully aware that the sage had such immensity of spiritual powers and possessed such stupendous mystical abilities that they were in themselves a sure-shot insurance against any harm coming to the two princes whose safety was now the sage's responsibility.

The king was sure that the venerated sage's blessings and benediction were enough to ensure that his sons were safe and secure with him, and sending soldiers to guard them would imply that the king had no faith in the sage and his abilities to protect his two sons, and this situation would be disastrous for both the king and his two beloved sons as well as their family as the sage might take umbrage at it, and annoying a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra was never a good option.

Verse no. 7:

मातृवर्गचरणस्पृशौ मुनेः तौ प्रपद्य पदवीम् महौजसः।
 रेजतुर्गतिवशात्प्रवर्तिनौ भास्करस्य मधुमाधवाविव॥ ११-७

mātrvargacaranasprśau muneḥ tau prapadya padavīm mahaujasah |
 rejaturgativaśātpurvartinau bhāskarasya madhumādhavāviva || 11-7

11-7. Before leaving with sage Vishwamitra, the two young princes touched the feet of their respective mothers to seek their blessings and permission to leave. Then when they followed the powerful sage it appeared as if the two months of Chaitra and Vaisakha were following the Sun.

[Note--The Chaitra and Vaisakha months, roughly corresponding to the months of March & April, and May & June respectively, are very hot and scorching as the sun shines directly over the head, with no shade from the clouds to provide any relief. In this analogy, sage Vishwamitra is like the sun, and Lord Ram and Laxman are like the two months of Chaitra and Vaisakha because they would cause immense problems for the demon race just like these two months cause immense suffering for the creatures because of the intense heat of the sun during the course of these months.

Metaphorically, this verse means that just like the heat of these two months of summer cause immense suffering to the creatures and scorch the earth so would Lord Ram and Laxman scorch the demons. They would be aided by the stupendous spiritual and mystical powers of sage Vishwamitra just like the powerful sun provides its heat to these two months to enable them to scorch the earth and its inhabitants, for without the help of the sun the months themselves would not be hot enough to do anything.

When Lord Ram and Laxman would unleash their arrows at the demons under guidance and blessings of sage Vishwamitra, then these demons would find no shelter anywhere just like no succour is available to the world during these two months. Even standing under a tree doesn't help as the entire atmosphere is burning hot.]

Verse no. 8:

वीचिलोलभुजयोस्तयोर्गतम् शैशवाच्चपलमप्यशोभत।
 तोयदागमे इवोद्धयभिद्ययोः नामधेयसदृशम् विचेष्टितम्॥ ११-८

vīcilolabhujayostayorgatam śaiśavāccapalamapyasobhata |
 tooyadāgame ivoddyabhidyayoḥ nāmadheyasadrśam viceṣṭitam || 11-8

11-8. These two princes were young and energetic, and they had ventured out for the first time unguarded by royal servants into the verdant green countryside that was resplendent with varied colours and charming fragrance of flowers, leaves and herbs. Hence, they felt free and liberated from the shackles of royalty while thoroughly enjoying the beauty of Nature on their own terms. They were very restless, going here and there and waving their long arms at every sundry sight they saw. Their vibrant energy and enthusiastic gait was so captivating and dynamic that they reminded the beholder of the two rivers named Udhyā and Bhidyā that surge and gush forward with such vigour and energy during the rainy months, when they are filled with abundance of rain-water, that they collapse anything that comes in their way, with their heaving

waves splashing, tossing and dashing violently against their banks and sweeping away anything that comes in their way.

For the two brothers, it was an outing full of adventure and a recreational pastime as they followed the sage to his hermitage.

Verse no. 9:

**तौ बलातिबलयोः प्रभावतो विद्ययोः पथि मुनिप्रदिष्टयोः।
मम्लतुर्न मणिकुट्टिमोचितौ मातृपार्श्वपरिवर्तिनाविव॥ ११-९**

tau balātibalayoḥ prabhāvato vidyayoḥ pathi munipradiṣṭayoḥ |
mamlaturna maṇikuṭṭimocitau mātṛpārśvaparivartināviva || 11-9

11-9. On the way, sage Vishwamitra taught both the princes two powerful mystical abilities called Balaa and Ati-balaa¹ that could be activated by invoking certain Vedic hymns. By the virtue of these two magical abilities, both the princes were able to overcome hunger, thirst and tiredness of walking long distances¹. In effect, the two princes were feeling fresh, comfortable and rejuvenated as if they were enjoying playing around their mothers in their own palace that was embellished with jewels.

[Note--¹The Balaa and Ati-balaa are two great mystical abilities that can be activated by invoking certain mantras or hymns of the Vedas. They grant immense stamina, enhanced energy, great resilience, the ability to overcome physical discomfort and to easily cope with tension, anxiety and uncertainty.]

This knowledge came in handy to Lord Ram and Laxman later on in life when they spent long fourteen years in the forest, and fought the ferocious war of Lanka against the demon king Ravana. They would never feel exhausted or tired, nor hungry and thirsty during long walks through desolate and wild land of the forest.]

Verse no. 10:

**पूर्ववृत्तकथितैः पुराविदः सानुजः पितृसखस्य राघवः।
उह्यमान इव वाहनोचितः पादचारमपि न व्यभावयत्॥ ११-१०**

pūrvavṛttakathitaiḥ purāvidaḥ sānujaḥ pitṛsakhasya rāghavaḥ |
uhyamāna iva vāhanocitaḥ pādacāramapi na vyabhāwayat || 11-10

11-10. Both Lord Ram and Laxman, who were accustomed to ride on elephants, horses, chariots and other kinds of vehicles whenever they moved out of their palace, however did not at all feel tired or weary while walking on foot with the learned sage Vishwamitra, who was a friend of their father king Dashrath and a very learned and wise sage, because he kept the brothers fully engaged and well entertained by telling them many interesting stories from the Purans and other ancient texts in which the sage was well-versed.

[Note--Like countless other boys of their age, the two princes loved stories, and hence they enthusiastically listened to the many fascinating stories that the wise sage kept narrating to them so as to keep their minds busy and occupied. Along with the two

mystical abilities known as Balaa and Ati-balaa that helped to keep fatigue and weariness away from the two boys, these stories also served to keep Lord Ram and Laxman entertained and occupied while they walked alongside the great sage who showed the two boys the same love and affection that their own father Dashrath would have shown them. In effect, sage Vishwamitra was like their second father, with an additional benefit of being allowed to walk freely in the green countryside with him which would not have been possible had they gone somewhere with their father king Dashrath, because wherever the king went out anywhere he was invariably accompanied by his army. All these factors helped the two brothers thoroughly enjoy this journey of freedom and adventure.]

Verse no. 11:

तौ सरांसि रसवद्भिरम्बुभिः कूजितैः श्रुतिसुखैः पतत्रिणः।
वायवः सुरभिपुष्परेणुभिः छायाया च जलदाः सिषेविरे॥ ११-११

tau sarāṁsi rasavadbhirambubhiḥ kūjitaiḥ śrutisukhaiḥ patatrināḥ |
vāyavaḥ surabhipuṣpareṇubhiḥ chāyayā ca jaladāḥ siṣevire || 11-11

11-11. Mother Nature and all her manifestations did their bit to serve Lord Ram and Laxman to the best of their abilities. For instance, the lakes and ponds provided sweet water, the birds entertained their ears with their charming sounds and musical chirping, the wind sprayed pleasant fragrance of flowers all along the way to make the environment scented, and the clouds spread their cool shade over the two princes so that they don't have to face the harshness of the sun's rays as they walked alongside the sage.

Verse no. 12:

नाम्भसाम् कमलशोभिनाम् तथा शाखिनाम् च न परिश्रमच्छिदाम्।
दर्शनेन लघुना यथा तयोः प्रीतिमापुरुभयोस्तपस्विनः॥ ११-१२

nāmbhasām kamalaśobhinām tathā śākhinām ca na pariśramacchidām |
darśanena laghunā yathā tayohḥ prītimāpurubhayostapasvināḥ || 11-12

11-12. The sages, hermits and ascetics who lived in sundry hermitages on the way felt so highly delighted, fortunate and blessed when they saw the two brothers that they had never experienced such kind of feeling of exhilaration and satisfaction earlier although they lived in the midst of the inherently charming and comforting environment of Nature represented by the ponds and lakes where lotus flowers bloomed, as well as the green trees whose shades were so cool and comfortable that they were able to remove weariness of travellers.

Verse no. 13:

स्थाणुदग्धवपुषस्तपोवनम् प्राप्य दाशरथिरात्तकार्मुकः।
विग्रहेण मदनस्य चारुणा सोऽभवत्प्रतिनिधिर्न कर्मणा॥ ११-१३

sthāṇudagdhavapuṣastapovanam prāpya dāśarathirāttakārmukhaḥ |
vighraheṇa madanasya cāruṇā so'bhavatpratidinidhirna karmaṇā || 11-13

11-13. Lord Ram arrived at the hermitage where Lord Shiva had once burnt Kaamdeo (the patron deity of passion and lust) when the latter had tried to disturb meditation of Lord by his wanton acts of mischief¹.

Lord Ram's physical personality and charm were far more superior to what Kaamdeo possessed, but the Lord's deeds were completely opposite to that of the wanton acts of Kaamdeo, as the latter was driven by mischievous intention to tease Lord Shiva and disturb his penance, while Lord Ram was driven by the noble intent of helping sage Vishwamitra complete his penance and fire sacrifice that was being constantly defiled by the mischief of the demons².

[Note--¹This episode of Kaamdeo trying to disturb Lord Shiva's meditation, and the Lord becoming so annoyed with his mischief that he burnt Kaamdeo in his fire of wrath, has been described in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 82-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87.

²The underlying idea is very simple and straightforward. One's actions and deeds are judged by one's intentions, and the objective that one wishes to accomplish by such actions and deeds. Kaamdeo's intention was bad as he had tried to disturb Lord Shiva's meditation and penance, while Lord Ram's intention was good as he wanted to help the sages do their religious deeds without obstruction.]

Verse no. 14:

तौ सुकेतुसुतया खिलीकृते कौशिकादिवदितशापया पथि।
निन्यतुः स्थलनिवेशिताटनी लीलयैव धनुषी अधिज्यताम्॥ ११-१४

tau suketusutayā khilīkṛte kauśikādividitaśāpayā pathi |
ninyatuḥ sthalaniveśitātānī līlayaiva dhanuṣī adhijyatām || 11-14

11-14. On their way, Lord Ram and Laxman met the demoness named Tadka, daughter of Suketu. She was a terrible creature who had ruined the surrounding forest and made it a desolate place by her constant recklessness. Sage Vishwamitra had already told Lord Ram about her and the curse she had cast on the forest and its hermitages.

So therefore, as soon as she appeared menacingly before the two brothers, they put one end of their bows on the ground for support and slightly bend the bows so that they can slide the strings in from the other end to ready the bow¹.

[Note--¹The bow's string is either removed or loosened when it is not in use. So, the brothers had to put the string on it by slightly bending it, and for this purpose they rested one end of the bow on the ground, bent its shaft inwards, slid the string deftly in from the other end, and made it ready for use.]

Verse no. 15:

ज्यानिनादमथ गृह्णती तयोः प्रादुरास बहुलक्षपाछविः।

ताडका चलकपालकुण्डला कालिकेव निबिडा बलाकिनी॥ ११-१५

jyāninādamatha gr̥hṇatī tayoh prādurāsa bahulakṣapāchaviḥ |
tāḍakā calakapālakuṇḍalā kālikeva nibiḍā balākinī || 11-15

11-15. No sooner the brothers had pulled the strings of their bows and released it with a mighty twang, than its sound so much excited the ferocious Tadka that she lunged furiously forward to block their way. Tadka had a dark complexion like that of moonless night, and human skulls hanging from her ears like pendants attached to ear-rings shook wildly as she dashed forward and stood before the two brothers. With her dark complexion and white human skull-bones swaying from her ears she looked like a dark cloud in the midst of white cranes.

[Note--Here in this analogy, Tadka's dark body is likened to the dark cloud, and white human skull-bones swaying from her ears to white cranes that fly on the side of the cloud as it is viewed from the ground.]

Verse no. 16:

तीव्रवेगधुतमार्गवृक्षया प्रेतचीवरवसा स्वनोग्रया।

अभ्यभावि भरताग्रजस्तया वात्ययेव पितृकाननोत्थया॥ ११-१६

tīvravegadhutamārgavṛkṣayā pretacīvaravasā svanograyā |
abhyabhāvi bharatāgrajastayā vātyayeve pitṛkānanotthayā || 11-16

11-16. That fearful Tadka lunged violently at Lord Ram. The trees all around the roadside shook by the speed of her attack. She was attired in the shroud wrapped around evil spirits in grave yards, yelled with a ghostly voice, and had a form that resembled the blinding dust-storm that arises when some evil spirit visits the grave yard.

Verse no. 18:

उद्यतैकभुजयष्टिमायतीम् श्रोणिलम्बिपुरुषान्त्रमेखलाम्।

ताम् विलोक्य वनितावधे घृणाम् पत्रिणा सह मुमोच राघवः॥ ११-१७

udyataikabhujayasṭimāyatīm śroṇilambipuruṣāntramekhalām |
tām vilokya vanitāvadhe ghr̥ṇām patriṇā saha mumoca rāghavaḥ || 11-17

11-17. When Lord Ram saw that fearful Tadka coming towards him with raised arms which were like heavy battle-rams, and wearing a hip-girdle of human skulls, the Lord at once shot an arrow towards her while at the same time releasing his mind from the guilt of killing a woman¹.

[Note-¹Lord Ram, like the rest of his family members of the lineage of king Raghu, was a strict follower of Dharma, and killing a woman was not ordinarily a good and

righteous thing to do for a noble knight. But the situation here was different: Tadka was a notorious and evil creature who had killed numerous innocent human beings and relished eating their flesh. She flaunted her ferocity, cruelty and blood-thirstiness by wearing human skulls around her hip and as pendants from her earrings. She had been relentlessly tormenting sages and ascetics, destroying their hermitages, and defiling their sacrifices. She had killed innocent sages and other pious people and devoured them. So she had relinquished her right to be excused from being killed just because she was a woman. That is why Lord Ram did not have any guilt while slaying her.]

Verse no. 18:

**यच्चकार विवरम् शिलाघने ताडकोरसि स रामसायकः।
अप्रविष्टविषयस्य रक्षसाम् द्वारतामगमदन्तकस्य तत्॥ ११-१८**

yaccakāra vivaram śilāghane tāḍakorasi sa rāmasāyakaḥ |
apraviṣṭaviṣayasya rakṣasām dvāratāmagamadantakasya tat || 11-18

11-18. The powerful arrow shot by Lord Ram at Tadka penetrated her hard rock-like chest and pierced her heart, creating a hole like the opening of a cave on the side of a mountain. This hole was symbolically like a doorway opened by Lord Ram that would enable Yam, the god of death, to enter the country of the demon race (i.e. Lanka) which hitherto was out-of-bounds for him (out of fear of Ravana).

[Note--The slaying of Tadka by Lord Ram was the first direct confrontation between the demons and the Lord. It was a harbinger of what was to come. The hole in the chest of Tadka metaphorically opened the door by which the god of death would one day enter Lanka to eliminate the demons.]

Verse no. 19:

**बाणभिन्नहृदया निपेतुषी सा स्वकाननभुवम् न केवलाम्।
विष्टपत्रयपराजयस्थिराम् रावणश्रियमपि व्यकम्पयत्॥ ११-१९**

bāṇabhinnahrdayā nipetuṣī sā svakānanabhuvam na kevalām |
viṣṭapatrayaparājayasthirām rāvaṇaśriyamapi vyakampayat || 11-19

11-19. The chest of Tadka was ruptured by the arrow shot by Lord Ram, and when her gigantic form fell down on earth it not only shook the ground of that forest but also made the deity representing Ravana's glory and his conquest of the three worlds, shiver too.

[Note--The patron deity of Lanka shook with fear at the grave prospect its chief patron now faced. The slaying of Tadka was a warning signal for the demon race that its time was up.]

Verse no. 20:

राममन्मथशरेण ताडिता दुःसहेन हृदये निशाचरी।

गन्धवद्गुधिरचन्दनोक्षिता जीवितेशवसतिम् जगाम सा॥ ११-२०

rāmamanmathaśareṇa tāḍitā duḥsahena hrdaye niśācarī |

gandhavadrudhiracandanokṣitā jīviteśavasatim jagāma sā || 11-20

11-20. With her heart penetrated by the infallible arrow of Lord Ram, who was more charming than Kaamdeo, the patron deity of love, desire and beauty, the demoness Tadka bled profusely, with stinking blood flowing out of her wound and smearing her all over, as she dragged herself to the abode of Yam, the god of death and hell. It reminded one of a lovelorn lady putting aside all shame and self-respect as she smears herself with a scented paste of sandalwood and heads to the home of her lover (even though the lover may have already spurned her overtures and rebuked her).

[Note-- This verse is an excellent example of an oxymoron--which is a figure of speech or expression of an idea in which words or phrases of apparently opposite meaning are used together to intentionally for effect. As is evident, the first half of the verse says that Tadka was smeared with blood that gave out a foul smell as she headed to the door of Yam, and the other half says that the lovelorn lady smears herself with a paste of sandalwood which has a pleasant scent as she goes to her lover's place.

When a woman falls in love with someone, she forgets all sense of decency, probity and propriety, as well as the infamy and scorn that would come to her from the society, when she decides to go to visit her lover even though the latter has already spurned her passionate gestures and had rebuked her. She would become so mad with burning passion that when she goes to her lover's place, she smears sandalwood scent all over her body to hide the stink of sweat and other odour emanating from her nervous and perspiring body, not bothering that this scent would invite unwarranted attention from strangers. Ordinarily, a woman would go to her lover's home quietly, without arousing suspicion and drawing unnecessary attention, but this particular lovelorn woman pays no heed to either her own reputation or that of her lover's while embarking on her misadventure.

In this verse, Tadka is compared to this reckless woman because she did not bother about the consequences of attacking Lord Ram.]

Verse no. 21:

नैरृतघ्नमथ मन्त्रवन्मुनेः प्रापदस्त्रमवदानतोषितात्।

ज्योतिरिन्धननिपाति भास्करात् सूर्यकान्त इव ताडकान्तकः॥ ११-२१

nairṛtaghnamatha mantravanmuneḥ prāpadastramavadānatoṣitāt |

jyotirindhananipāti bhāskarāt sūryakānta iva tāḍakāntakaḥ || 11-21

11-21. Lord Ram's slaying of Tadka mightily pleased sage Vishwamitra. He concluded that the Lord was indeed capable of eliminating the scourge of the demons, and was therefore eligible to be taught the secret of certain mystical weapons that would empower him to do so.

With this decision, the learned sage imparted the esoteric knowledge of these powerful secret magical weapons to Lord Ram, along with the knowledge regarding how to use them, which would empower him with mystical powers and stupendous abilities that in turn would help him to carry out his mandate of freeing the world from the terror and mayhem unleashed by the demons.

Hence, Lord Ram acquired powerful magical weapons from sage Vishwamitra that would scorch the demons in the same way as a gem known as 'surya-kant mani' acquires the radiant energy from the sun to enable it to burn wood¹.

[Note--¹It is a known fact that a powerful magnifying glass can focus the energy of the sun onto a piece of paper or a dry leaf causing them to burn. In ancient times when there were no match-sticks, this 'surya-kant mani' was used to light the fire during a sacrifice.

In ordinary English, it is called the 'Star Ruby'. The sun is a star, and the ruby is related to a star as bright as the sun. It is a rare gem that exhibits the seven colours of sunlight when held under the sun, thereby mimicking the sun itself.]

Verse no. 22:

वामनाश्रमपदम् ततः परम् पावनम् श्रुतमृषेरुपेयिवान्।

उन्मनाः प्रथमजन्मचेष्टिता न्यस्मरन्नपि बभूव राघवः॥ ११-२२

vāmanāśramapadam tataḥ param pāvanam śrutamṛṣerupeyivān |
unmanāḥ prathamajanmaceṣṭitā nysmarannapi babhūva rāghavaḥ || 11-22

11-22. Moving ahead, Lord Ram arrived at the sanctified hermitage of Lord Vaman (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu as a dwarf ascetic in some ancient time)¹. Even though sage Vishwamitra had already enlightened the Lord about its history, yet he could not fully recollect the events associated with this incarnation. Still, the very holy aura of the place made Lord Ram feel exhilarated.

[Note--Vaman (pronounced as Vaaman): This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu and an ancient one, for it took place in Sata Yuga, the 1st era of the 4-era cycle of creation and destruction according to Hindu scriptures. The Sata Yuga is also called the age of the Vedas as it was during this epoch the ancient scriptures known as the Vedas came into being and their hymns were primarily used to perform sacred fire sacrifices.

Hence, being an ancient incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Vaaman finds mention in the Vedas too—e.g. in Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/5; Taittiriya Brahman, 1/6/1; and Taittiriya Sanhita, 2/1/3.

When the great King Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods who ruled over the heavens, Vishnu had taken the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a 'Vaaman' or a dwarf, and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, Vaaman measured the entire earth and the nether world with one step, the heaven with the second step, and for the third step he measured Bali's own head symbolizing the crown of the kingdom of Bali.

To wit, when Bali found that he was cornered as he could not fulfil the word given to a Brahmin, because the land for the third step was not available, he offered himself to be tied and enslaved by Lord Vaaman as a punishment for unfulfilled vow. So Lord Vaaman gracefully put his third step on Bali's head, which though appeared to be a punishment but was actually a blessing in disguise.

From then onwards, Lord Vishnu is also called 'Trivikram'—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps.

However, the Lord was very pleased with Bali's principles of keeping one's words even at the cost of allowing himself to be a slave of the Lord. So even though Lord Vaaman put his leg on Bali's head, thereby pushing him into the nether world, yet the Lord is so kind and gracious that he saw the injustice that was done to Bali, a magnanimous and righteous King who had stood firm in his vow of making charity, and never rescinded on his commitment inspite of losing his crown and self-respect.

So therefore, the Lord made him the king of the nether world, and himself took up the job of protecting him there as his gate-keeper. This incarnation of Lord Vishnu is his fifth and followed the Nrisingh form which was the fourth. The idea behind this Vaaman incarnation is that even the most humble looking man, represented by the diminutive Vaaman in this story, can indeed have the stupendous power of the Spirit that even the most powerful gods and kings lack.]

Verse no. 23:

**आससाद मुनिरात्मनस्ततः शिष्यवर्गपरिकल्पितार्हणम्।
बद्धपल्लवपुटाञ्जलिद्रुमम् दर्शनोन्मुखमृगम् तपोवनम्॥ ११-२३**

āsasāda munirātmanastataḥ śiṣyavargaparikalpitārhaṇam |
baddhapallavapuṭāñjalidrumam darśanonmukhamrgam tapovanam || 11-23

11-23. From there (Vaman's hermitage), sage Vishwamitra arrived at his own hermitage where his disciples had readied all paraphernalia needed for worship and performance of the sacrifice which was kept pending till the sage returned (from Ayodhya). The trees stood with their leaves touching each other in close formation as if they were welcoming the sage and his guests in the same manner as one welcomes someone with folded hands and palms touching each other. Likewise, the deer were looking in the direction from which the sage arrived with the two brothers as if the animals were eager to welcome them too.

Verse no. 24:

**तत्र दीक्षितमृषिम् ररक्षतुः विघ्नतो दशरथात्मजौ शरैः।
लोकमन्धतमसात्क्रमोदितौ रश्मिभिः शशिदिवाकराविव॥ ११-२४**

tatra dīkṣitamṛṣim rarakṣatuḥ vighnato daśarathātmajau śaraiḥ |
lokamandhatamasātkramoditau raśmibhiḥ śaśidivākarāviva || 11-24

11-24. Just as the sun and the moon follow each other to spread light on earth with the help of their rays when they rise in the sky one after another sequentially (the former during the day, and the latter during the night), so likewise Lord Ram and Laxman,

the two sons of king Dashrath, took turns to protect sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice from danger and getting defiled by the demons, using their powerful arrows to accomplish this task.

[Note--The two brothers took turns to guard sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice. Just as the sun lights up the earth with its rays during the day and the moon during the night in sequential manner, so did Lord Ram and Laxman took turns to stand on guard to protect the sage and his sacrifice.]

Verse no. 25:

**वीक्ष्य वेदिमथ रक्तबिन्दुभिः बन्धुजीवपृथुभिः प्रदूषिताम्।
संभ्रमोऽभवदपोढकर्मणाम् ऋत्विजाम् च्युतविकङ्कतसुचाम्॥ ११-२५**

vīkṣya vedimatha raktabindubhiḥ bandhujīvapṛthubhiḥ pradūṣitām |
saṁbhramo'bhavadapodhakarmaṇām ṛtvijām cyutavikaṅkatasucām || 11-25

11-25. As soon as the priests commenced the rituals of the fire sacrifice, they noticed that the walls of the sacrificial fire pit was defiled by large drops of thick blood as deeply red as the flower called the Mid-day flower (Pentapetes phoenicea) or the Jungle Geranium flower (Ixora coccinea)¹ that fell on it.

They were astonished at this development, and were left with no choice but to discontinue the ritual. So they put down the wooden spatula made of Vikankata or Khair wood (Acacia catechu or Senegalia catechu tree)² with which they were making offerings to the sacred fire.

[Note--¹The Mid-day flower is bright red in colour. It is also called the 'flame of the jungle'.

²The wood of the Khair tree is hard and durable. It is a tall deciduous tree that grows in wild forests in India and Southeast Asia. Its wood is used to make spatula to offer combustible materials to the fire pit because it can not only endure the heat of the fire but also does not break easily because of its hardness.]

Verse no. 26:

**उन्मुखः सपदि लक्षमणाग्रजो बाणमाश्रयमुखात्समुद्धरन्।
रक्षसाम् बलमपश्यदम्बरे गृध्रपक्षपवनेरितध्वजम्॥ ११-२६**

unmukhaḥ sapadi lakṣamaṇāgrajo bāṇamāśrayamukhātsamuddharan |
rakṣasām balamapaśyadambare gṛdhrapakṣapavanēritadhvajam || 11-26

11-26. At that moment, Lord Ram took an arrow from his quiver and looked up into the sky. He observed that a large contingent of demon army was riding astride vultures who were flapping their wide wings as they flew overhead. The banners of the demons were swaying due to the movement in the air caused by this flapping.

{The vulture is a flesh eating bird, and its appearance is considered a bad omen.}

Verse no. 27:

तत्र यावधिपती मखदिवषाम् तौ शरव्यमकरोत्स नेतरान्।
किम् महोरगविसर्पिविक्रमो राजिलेषु गरुडः प्रवर्तते॥ ११-२७

tatra yāvadhipatī makhadviṣām tau śaravyamakarotsa netarān |
kim mahoragavisarpivikramo rājileṣu garuḍaḥ pravartate || 11-27

11-27. Lord Ram targeted the two chief demons who were leading the demon forces and were responsible for actively defiling the fire sacrifice. The Lord selected these two demon commanders to be targets of his arrows, while sparing others who were merely following their leader's orders.

For instance, when the celestial Eagle known as Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu) attacks serpents, it selects its targets carefully, attacking only large serpents who lead the group while sparing the smaller ones.

[Note--In this analogy, the example of Garud is cited to stress that great warriors focus their attention only on senior commanders of the opposite army, for if these seniors are subdued then the rest of the ordinary soldiers would surrender with ease. There is no point in wasting time and energy in trying to crush ordinary soldiers who are merely servants and are forced to obey the orders of their chiefs.

Similarly here, Lord Ram targeted only the two chief demons who the Lord observed were leading the army and were aggressively defiling the fire sacrifice by dropping blood from the sky.]

Verse no. 28:

सोऽस्त्रमुग्रजवमस्त्रकोविदः संदधे धनुषि वायुदैवतम्।
तेन शैलगुरुमप्यपातयत् पाण्डुपत्रमिव ताडकासुतम्॥ ११-२८

so'stramugrajavamastrakovidāḥ saṁdadhe dhanuṣi vāyudaivatam |
tena śailagurumapyapātayat pāṇḍupatramiva tāḍakāsutam || 11-28

11-28. Lord Ram, who was an expert archer and skilled in the use of powerful weapons of various denominations, mounted a powerful arrow called 'Vayavystra', which had the velocity and the strength of the wind-god, on his bow, and shot it at the demon Marich, the son of Tadka, who was as heavy as a mountain. When this arrow struck Marich, the latter was flung far away just like a dry leaf that is swept away during a violent storm.

{Though Marich had a bulky body and his weight was no less than that of a mountain, yet when Lord Ram's weapon struck him he was flown away to a far-away land just like a dry leaf is swept away during a violent storm.}

Verse no. 29:

यः सुबाहुरिति राक्षसोऽपरः तत्र तत्र विसर्प मायया।
तम् क्षुरप्रशकलीकृतम् कृती पत्रिणाम् व्यभजदाश्रमाद्बहिः॥ ११-२९

yaḥ subāhuriti rākṣaso'paraḥ tatra tatra visasarpa māyayā |
tam kṣurapraśakalīkṛtam kṛti patriṇām vyabhajadāśramādbahiḥ || 11-29

11-29. Lord Ram then targeted the second demon commander named Subahu who was moving stealthily in the sky and trying to avoid being targeted by the Lord after he saw the fate of Marich. But Lord Ram shot an arrow that hit Subahu directly and flung the demon outside the precincts of the hermitage where the sages were conducting the fire sacrifice.

As soon as Subahu fell down dead and his body splintered into many pieces, birds of prey, such as vultures and hawks, descended on these pieces immediately in droves, and soon gobbled them all up.

Verse no. 30:

इत्यपास्तमखविघ्नयोस्तयोः सांयुगीनमभिनन्द्य विक्रमम्।
ऋत्विजः कुलपतेर्यथाक्रमम् वाग्यतस्य निरवर्तयन्क्रियाः॥ ११-३०

ityapāstamakhavighnayostayoḥ sāmyugīnamabhinandya vikramam |
ṛtvijaḥ kulapateryathākramam vāgyatasya niravartayankriyāḥ || 11-30

11-30. The priests who were conducting the fire sacrifice on behalf of sage Vishwamitra, who himself was obliged to remain silent during the course of the rituals, lavishly praised the two brothers for their valour and skills by the help of which they could resume and finally complete the sacrifice successfully.

[Note--So, what happened to the rest of the demon army? By what is mentioned in verse no. 27 herein above, it is clear that since Lord Ram targeted only the two chief commanders of the demon army, i.e. Marich and Subahu, so as soon as they were done away with, the rest of the demon soldiers fled in terror.]

Verse no. 31:

तौ प्रणामचलकाकपक्षकौ भ्रातरावबभूथाप्लुतो मुनिः।
आशिषामनुपदं समस्पृशत् दर्भपाटलतलेन पाणिना॥ ११-३१॥

tau praṇāmacalakākapakṣakau bhrātarāvavabhṛthāpluto muniḥ |
āśiṣāmanupadaṁ samaspr̥śat darbhapāṭalatalena pāṇinā || 11-31

11-31. When the fire sacrifice was over, sage Vishwamitra performed his final oblations and took his bath. After that, the exhilarated sage was so happy and gratified that he liberally blessed Lord Ram and Laxman, whose lock of hairs dangled loosely as they bowed reverentially before the sage while receiving his blessings.

The sage was still wearing on his fingers a ring made of darbha grass¹ that is worn by the patron who sits to do the fire sacrifice as he was blessing the two brothers by simultaneously putting the palms of his hands respectively on the heads of the brothers.

[Note--¹The darbha grass is also known as Kusha grass. In common English, it is known as Halfa grass, Big Cordgrass, or Salt reed grass. It is a perennial reed of the grass family that is used during religious rituals as it is considered pure. It has long slender stems and bears a tuft at its end resembling a priest who sports a tuft on his head while doing a religious ritual. Its botanical name is 'Desmostachya bipinnata'.]

Verse no. 32:

तम् न्यमन्त्रयत संभृतक्रतुः मैथिलः स मिथिलाम् व्रजन्वशी।
राघवावपि निनाय बिभ्रतौ तद्धनुःश्रवणजम् कुतूहलम्॥ ११-३२

tam nyamantrayata sambhṛtakratuḥ maithilāḥ sa mithilām vrajanvaśī |
rāghavāvapi nināya bibhratau taddhanuḥśravaṇajam kutūhalaḥ || 11-32

11-32. Meanwhile, the great King of Mithila, known by the name of Janak, was organising a 'bow ceremony' with the objective of marrying his daughter Sita¹. He had invited great sages to attend it. He had, in the process, also sent an invitation to sage Vishwamitra, who was a senior sage famed for his wisdom, self-restraint and self-realisation, to come.

When the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, heard about this 'bow ceremony' from the sage, they showed great interest in it (just like boys of their age are always eager to witness spectacles and ceremonies with the aim of enjoying them).

Hence, when the sage was going to attend this ceremony, he took the two brothers along with him.

{Sage Vishwamitra had, by this time, developed a special bond of fatherly love for the two brothers. He began to love them so much that he always wanted them by his side as long as it was possible. Hence, when he observed that these two young boys were enthusiastic in joining him to enjoy a new adventure, the sage was mightily pleased and willingly took them along.}

[Note--¹King Janak was organising this 'bow ceremony' for the marriage of his daughter Sita. This bow was very large, heavy and stiff. So the king had set a condition that any great warrior who could lift and string the bow would become eligible to marry her.]

Verse no. 33:

तैः शिवेषु वसतिर्गताध्वभिः सायमाश्रमतनुष्वगृह्यत।
येषु दीर्घतपसः परिग्रहो वासवक्षणकलत्रताम् ययौ॥ ११-३३

taiḥ śiveṣu vasatirgatādhvabhiḥ sāyamāśramatanuṣvagrhyata |
yeṣu dirghatapasaḥ parigraho vāsavakṣaṇakalatratām yayau || 11-33

11-33. On their way to Janakpur, evening arrived. So they (sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman) decided to rest for the night under the shade of beautiful trees at a hermitage where once a very righteous sage Gautam's wife named Ahilya was cheated by Indra (the lustful king of gods) for a short while to establish an alliance with her¹.

[Note--¹The story of Ahilya is briefly as follows: She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world know about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken-pox.

The story of Ahilya's liberation from her horrifying curse is this: When Lord Ram, accompanied by his brother Laxman, was on his way to Janakpur with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow-breaking ceremony where later on he would marry Janka's daughter Sita, the Lord saw a rock or a boulder, perhaps shaped like a lady, lying alone and forlorn in an abandoned hermitage. This aroused the Lord's curiosity. When he enquired about it, the sage told him the story of Ahilya and how she became a stone. The sage asked Lords Ram to be gracious upon her and free her from her torments by removing the curse by touching her with the dust of his holy feet. As soon as the Lord touched that rock with his foot, Ahilya was revived. She had tears rolling down her eyes, and with a bowed head and heart overflowing with gratitude and joy she offered her prayers and obeisance to Lord Ram. Then she went back to heaven to be reunited with her husband, sage Gautam.

This story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60; (c) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 39-40; (d) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-61; and (e) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, from Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33—to Sarga/Canto 49, verse nos. 1-21.]

Verse no. 34:

प्रत्यपद्यत चिराय यत्पुनश्चारु गौतमवधूः शिलामयी।

स्वम् वपुः स किल किल्बिषच्छिदाम् रामपादरजसामनुग्रहः॥ ११-३४

pratyapadyata cirāya yatpuna ścāru gautamavadhūḥ śilāmayī |
svam vapuḥ sa kila kilbiṣacchidām rāmapādarajasāmanugrahaḥ || 11-34

11-34. Ahilya, who had turned into a stone due to her husband sage Gautam's curse, now got back, after a long time, her beautiful original form of a charming lady. It was indeed the result of the sacred dust of Lord Ram's feet.

[Note--Though Ahilya was innocent and felt prey to deceit, yet her husband, sage Gautam, became so furious that he cursed her to become a stone. When he realised that he has punished Ahilya much more than what she deserved, and when she pleaded with him for some reprieve, the sage told her that later on when Lord Vishnu, in his incarnation as Lord Ram, would come to this hermitage and touches her stone-like body with his toes, she would be absolved of her sin, and regain her life and original form.]

Verse no. 35:

राघवान्वितमुपस्थितम् मुनिम् तम् निशम्य जनको जनेश्वरः।
अर्थकामसहितम् सपर्यया देहबद्धमिव धर्ममभ्यगात्॥ ११-३५

rāghavānvitamupasthitam munim tam niśamya janako janeśvaraḥ |
arthakāmasahitam saparyayā dehabaddhamiva dharmamabhyagāt || 11-35

11-35. When king Janak heard that the great sage Vishwamitra has arrived with Lord Ram and Laxman to visit him, he arranged all paraphernalia of worship to go and welcome them. When the king saw them he felt so honoured as if a personified form of Dharma has himself come to him along with its two prime rewards called Artha (wealth, prosperity) and Kaam (fulfilment of all desires).

[Note--In this analogy, sage Vishwamitra is compared with Dharma, and Lord Ram and Laxman with Artha and Kaam. The revered sage was venerable, righteous, and of high spiritual stature; he was like Dharma personified. Lord Ram and Laxman were like the rewards one gets by following the principles of Dharma diligently and honestly. Dharma itself is a way of life characterised by good virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, honesty, truthfulness, piety and humility, as well as nobility of thought and conduct. When a person leads such a life, he would be rewarded with prosperity and fulfilment of wishes. What would a person want more in this world if he has immense wealth and all his desires are fulfilled?

When this happens, it is obvious that a person would consider himself very fortunate, privileged and blessed. So likewise, to have a sage of Vishwamitra's stature as his guest was a great moment of honour for king Janak. To this was added the joy he got by meeting the two charming princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, whose mere presence captivated the mind and the heart of all who beheld them. Hence, the joy of Janak knew no bounds.]

Verse no. 36:

तौ विदेहनगरीनिवासिनाम् गाम् गताविव दिवः पुनर्वसू।
मन्यते स्म पिबताम् विलोचनैः पक्ष्मपातमपि वञ्चनाम् मनः॥ ११-३६

tau videhanagarīnivāsinām gām gatāviva divaḥ punarvasū |
manyate sma pibatām vilocanaiḥ pakṣmapātamapi vañcanām manaḥ || 11-36

11-36. The two princes looked so charming and beautiful as if the two stars called Punarvasu¹ had descended on the earth from their abode in the sky. The citizens of Janakpur were so mesmerised by their eye-catching beauty that they feasted on this sight, and stared at them without blinking so as not to miss even a moment without seeing them. {The citizens were so dazed at the beauty and charm of Lord Ram and Laxman that they forgot to blink. Their eyes literally froze in their sockets because even a momentary blink would have stolen a precious moment from the thorough joy that the citizens got by seeing Lord Ram and Laxman; blinking the eye would have deprived them of this joy.}

[Note--¹The Punarvasu star: It is a 'nakshatra' or a lunar mansion in Vedic astrology. It spans from 20⁰.00' Gemini to 3⁰.20' Cancer. It is associated with the virtues of renewal, rejuvenation, restoration, abundance and resilience. All these qualities were represented by Lord Ram and Laxman. This nakshatra is metaphorically represented by a quiver of arrows, once again symbolising the two brothers who too held quivers of arrows.

Punurvasu star is ruled by Jupiter, the largest planet and called Brihaspati in Vedic astrology. Since the great sage Vishwamitra, who symbolically represented Brishpati, the priest of the gods in heaven, was the guardian of the two princes on earth at present, hence this metaphor fits in well.]

Verse no. 37:

यूपवत्यवसिते क्रियाविधौ कालवित्कुशिकवंशवर्धनः।
राममिष्वसनदर्शनोत्सुकम् मैथिलाय कथयांबभूव सः॥ ११-३७

yūpavatya vasite kriyāvidhau kālavitkuśikavaṁśavardhanaḥ |
rāmamiṣvasanadarśanotsukam maithilāya kathayāmbabhūva saḥ || 11-37

11-37. When all formalities regarding the commencement of the 'bow ceremony' were completed, sage Vishwamitra, who had raised the statue of the family of the great sage Kaushik to which he belonged, and who understood which time was appropriate to start an action, told king Janak that Lord Ram and Laxman wished to see that bow.

Verse no. 38:

तस्य वीक्ष्य ललितम् वपुः शिशोः पार्थिवः प्रथितवंशजन्मनः।
स्वम् विचिन्त्य च धनुर्दुरानमम् पीडितो दुहितृशुल्कसंस्थया॥ ११-३८

tasya vīkṣya lalitam vapuḥ śiśoḥ pāṛthivaḥ prathitavaṁśajanmanaḥ |
svam vicintya ca dhanurdurānamam pīḍito duhitṛśulkaśamsthayā || 11-38

11-38. When king Janak saw the lovely and innocently boyish charm of Lord Ram, and thought of the bow at the center of the 'bow ceremony', and regretted very much because the bow was very huge, hard and heavy to lift. He regretted at his decision to organise the bow ceremony where his daughter Sita was to wed any mighty warrior who would be strong and powerful enough to able to lift and string the bow, as he now doubted if there was anyone competent enough to do so¹.

[Note--¹King Janak had declared his intention that he would marry his daughter Sita to any powerful warrior who could lift and string this bow. Primarily, king Janak had thought of this scheme to ensure that his daughter is married to the most powerful and the strongest warrior in the world. But after making his decision public, he had second thoughts. He doubted if there was any such competent suitor. Further, this bow belonged to Lord Shiva and was kept in his family's custody for safe-keeping. So on the face of it too it would be wrong to bet Sita's fate on it. But now it was too late.

Janak became pensive; he regretted his decision. He brooded over the thought that had he known Lord Ram earlier, he would have straightaway married Sita to him. But what could be done now.]

Verse no. 39:

**अब्रवीच्च भगवन्मतङ्गजैर्यद्बृहद्भिरपि कर्म दुष्करम्।
तत्र नाहमनुमन्तुमुत्सहे मोघवृत्ति कलभस्य चेष्टितम्॥ ११-३९**

abraviṇca bhagavanmataṅgajairyadbṛhadbhirapi karma duṣkaram |
tatra nāhamanumantumutsahe moghavṛtti kalabhasya ceṣṭitam || 11-39

11-39. With his mind in a dilemma, king Janak said to sage Vishwamitra: "Oh Lord! A task that cannot be accomplished even by muscular mature elephants, I don't think a baby elephant would be able to do it, for it would be an exercise in futility.

[Note--What king Janak meant here is that when famous warrior kings and princes find it impossible to move the bow even by a fraction of an inch, it would be improper to ask these boys to lift and string it. It will be humiliating for the two young princes.]

Verse no. 40:

**हेपिता हि बहवो नरेश्वरास्तेन तात धनुषा धनुर्भृतः।
ज्यानिघातकठिनत्वचो भुजान् स्वान्विधूय धिगिति प्रतस्थिरे॥ ११-४०**

hrepitā hi bahavo nareśvarāstena tāta dhanuṣā dhanurbhṛtaḥ |
jyānighātakathinatvaco bhujān svānvidhūya dhigiti pratasthire || 11-40

11-40. Oh Lord! This bow has already put to shame the pride and honour of the mightiest of warriors on earth who had professed their mastery with the bow, as none could as much as shift this bow from its bed, let alone lifting and stringing it. They went away cursing their own arms to have failed them and subjected them to such abject humiliation."

[Note--Even a causal reading of this verse would make it obvious that the bow ceremony was already underway and had been going on for sometime before sage Vishwamitra asked king Janak to let Lord Ram see it and try his hands at it.]

Verse no. 41:

**प्रत्युवाच तमृषिर्निशम्यताम् सारतोऽयमथवा गिरा कृतम्।
चाप एव भवतो भविष्यति व्यक्तशक्तिरशनिर्गिराविव॥ ११-४१**

pratyuvāca tamṛṣirniśamyatām sārato'yamathavā girā kṛtam |
cāpa eva bhavato bhaviṣyati vyaktaśaktiraśanirgīrāviva || 11-41

11-41. Hearing king Janak's reservations, sage Vishwamitra said to him: "Oh king Janak! Let me brief you about his (Lord Ram's) stupendous strength and remarkable abilities by giving you an example. Just as the effectiveness and strength of the Vajra (the powerful weapon of Indra; the thunderbolt) is manifested and becomes evident when it is tested against the rocks on the side of a mountain, so likewise Lord Ram's abilities and strength would become clear to you when he is tested against the might of this formidable bow that has resolutely repulsed all the great warriors you talk about.

{Oh King! When the thunderbolt strikes on the sides of a mountain, it cracks the rocks and sends them tumbling down. Similarly, have no doubt that the bow would stand no chance to offer resistance to the might of Lord Ram's arms, and I say this with conviction as I have been a witness of his abilities and strength¹.}

[Note--¹Sage Vishwamitra had personally witnessed Lord Ram eliminating the ferocious demons single-handedly. The sage had seen the Lord slaying Tadka and Subahu, and flinging Marich far away. The sage was famous for his spiritual achievements, and if he was confident that some other king or prince could help him in protecting his fire sacrifice and eliminating the demons, he surely would have approached them, instead of exposing these two little boys to this grave danger. Those princes and kings whom he approached would have been too glad to oblige the sage for they would get his blessings in return, which would enhance their status in the community of kings and princes of the time, and made them famous for all times to come for their valour, strength and courage.

But king Janak did not know of these remarkable feats of Lord Ram. So he had his doubts. On the contrary, sage Vishwamitra had first-hand knowledge of Lord Ram's abilities, so he was confident.]

Verse no. 42:

**एवमाप्तवचनात्स पौरुषम् काकपक्षकधरेऽपि राघवे।
श्रद्धे त्रिदशगोपमात्रके दाहशक्तिमिव कृष्णवर्त्मनि॥ ११-४२**

evamāptavacanātsa pauruṣam kākapakṣakadhare'pi rāghave |
śraddadhe tridaśagopamātrake dāhaśaktimiva kṛṣṇavartmani || 11-42

11-42. King Janak thought over the matter. He came to the conclusion that sage Vishwamitra, being a speaker of truth and possessing great spiritual prowess, must certainly have some reason for making such assurances regarding Lord Ram. The king had great faith in the sage, and he thought that one must not judge someone's abilities and powers and skills by his physical appearances or age alone as it may lead to erroneous conclusions. For just like a tiny spark from the fire, which is no larger than an insect, has the ability to set entire forests ablaze (i.e. cause wild-fires), so it is likewise possible that Lord Ram, who is boyish in his appearance and still sports a lock of jet-black hairs dangling from the sides of his head like any young boy of his age, indeed possesses the prowess, the might and the valour needed to lift and string the formidable bow.

{Who knows, wondered the king. So what is the harm in giving Lord Ram a chance. If things go well, then it would be a record of sorts, and if things don't turn right then still no great harm would come as Lord Ram was just a young boy and he could be excused for trying his hand at a new adventure that would at least give him experience to tackle competitions in future. Besides this, the king had to obey sage Vishwamitra, as refusal was not an option.}

Verse no. 43:

व्यादिदेश गणशोऽथ पार्श्वगान् कार्मुकाभिहरणाय मैथिलः।

तैजसस्य धनुषः प्रवृत्तये तोयदानिव सहस्रलोचनः॥ ११-४३

vyādideśa gaṇaśo'tha pāśvagān karmukābhiharaṇāya maithilaḥ |
taijasasya dhanuṣaḥ pravṛttaye toyadāniva sahasralocanaḥ || 11-43

11-43. After that, king Janak of Mithila sent large numbers of his servants to bring the mighty bow of Lord Shiva, just as Indra, the lord of the clouds, sends large banks of rain-bearing dark clouds to form a canvas against which the multicoloured gigantic celestial bow (i.e. the 'rain-bow') is seen in the sky.

[Note--The rain-bow has seven colours, and it spans the vast expanse of the sky, sitting across it like a gigantic arched gateway to heaven. It is symbolically the bow of Indra as the latter is the lord of the clouds and rain as well as of heaven. The rain-bow is formed against a backdrop of thick banks of dark clouds. Similarly, the bow which was at the center of this ceremony was also huge, and its length spanned across a vast arena from one end to another just like the rain-bow that spans across a wide swathe of the sky, stretching from one end of the horizon to the other end.

And, just as the rain-bow is a symbolic gateway to heaven, so was the bow of king Janak as it would open the doors of good luck and immense fame for the person who successfully passed its test.]

Verse no. 44:

तत्प्रसुप्तभुजगेन्द्रभीषणम् वीक्ष्य दाशरथिराददे धनुः।

विद्रुतक्रतुमृगानुसारिणम् येन बाणमसृजत्वृषध्वजः॥ ११-४४

tatprasuptabhujagendrabhīṣaṇam vīkṣya dāśarathirādade dhanuḥ |
vidrutakratumṛgānusāriṇam yena bāṇamasrjatvṛṣadhvajāḥ || 11-44

11-44. When the bow was brought there, it looked like a giant serpent (or a huge cobra) was asleep. Lord Ram easily lifted that bow which, in some ancient time, Lord Shiva had used to shoot an arrow that pursued the deity of a fire sacrifice, known as the 'Yagya Devta', who was trying to escape or flee away by assuming the form of a deer.

[Note--In some ancient time, a fire sacrifice was being performed in which the Yagya Devta, the deity associated with the sacrifice, too was present in the form of a deer. To test the authenticity of this deer as well as its integrity as the presiding deity of the sacrifice, Brahma, the creator, assumed the form of a stag. The female deer got charmed by the stag and ran away from the arena of the sacred rituals in pursuit of the stag, forgetting its duty to be present there to accept the offerings and see it being completed successfully. This behaviour of the deity of the fire sacrifice angered Lord Shiva, who shot an arrow at this deer to punish it for its misdeeds. The bow used for this was the bow that was now at the center of the 'bow ceremony' held by king Janak.

This bow of Lord Shiva was called 'Pinak (pronounced Pinaak)'. Shiva was an ascetic, and this violent outburst of anger made him so disgusted that he did not want to keep it with him as it would remind him of this sad event. So he gifted it to Janak's family for keep-sake.]

Verse no. 45:

आततज्यमकरोत्स संसदा विस्मयस्तिमितनेत्रमीक्षितः।
शैलसारमपि नातियत्नतः पुष्पचापमिव पेशलम् स्मरः॥ ११-४५

ātatajyamakarotsa saṁsadaḥ viśmayastimitanetrāmīkṣitaḥ |
śailasāramapi nātiyatnataḥ puṣpacāpamiva peśalam smaraḥ || 11-45

11-45. While all the courtiers present at the sight gazed wide-eyed in amazement at Lord Ram, he effortlessly lifted the mighty bow and strung it in the same easy way as Kaamdeo, the patron god of love and passion, symbolically swiftly lifts his bow, which is as soft as flowers, and strings it to shoot an arrow of desire at the target of his passion and lust.

[Note--Kaamdeo represents the power of lust, passion and desire that is so powerful that it can overcome all sense of prudence and good manners when it strikes a person, no matter how powerful and self-controlled he might be. Kaamdeo's ability at this is demonstrated when he had shot an arrow at Lord Shiva to wake him from his meditation, and motivate the Lord to marry Parvati. This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 75-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87.]

Verse no. 46:

भज्यमानमतिमात्रकर्षणात् तेन वज्रपरुषस्वनम् धनुः।

भार्गवाय दृढमन्यवे पुनः क्षत्रमुद्यतमिव न्यवेदयत्॥ ११-४६

bhajyamānamatimātrakarṣaṇāt tena vajraparuṣasvanam dhanuḥ |
bhārgavāya dr̥ḍhamanyave punaḥ kṣatramudyatamiva nyavedayat || 11-46

11-46. Lord Ram stringed the bow and pulled the string so far back that the bow broke with a snap in the middle, making a mighty roar as if the Vajra (thunder-bolt) had struck its target with a thunderous sound. The sound of the bow breaking was so loud that it was heard by sage Parashuram in his hermitage, alerting him that the might of the Kshatriya race, which he had crushed a number of times, was once again on the ascendance.

[Note--The story goes that sage Parashuram had vanquished the warrior class, known as the Kshatriya race, a number of times--a fact he himself had boasted of as mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 272. With the breaking of the powerful bow of Lord Shiva by Lord Ram, who belonged to the Kshatriya race, it was a signal for sage Parashuram that this race was once again rising.]

Verse no. 47:

दृष्टसारमथ रुद्रकार्मुके वीर्यशुल्कमभिनन्द्य मैथिलः।

राघवाय तनयामयोनिजाम् रूपिणीम् श्रियमिव न्यवेदयत्॥ ११-४७

dr̥ṣṭasāramatha rudrakārmuke vīryaśulkamabhinandya maithilāḥ |
rāghavāya tanayāmayonijām rūpiṇīm śriyamiva nyavedayat || 11-47

11-47. Then, when the king of Mithila, i.e. king Janak, saw that Lord Ram has indeed broken the bow to show his valour and strength that fulfilled the king's condition for marrying his daughter, he summoned Sita, who was born from the womb of mother earth¹, and cheerfully gave her in marriage to Lord Ram as if he was symbolically giving goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity, to Lord Ram who represented Lord Vishnu, the heavenly Lord of Laxmi.

[Note--¹Sita: She was the divine consort of Lord Ram. If Ram was an incarnate Vishnu then Sita was goddess Laxmi, the heavenly consort of Vishnu and the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity. If Ram is to be treated as a personified form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm then Sita is Maya (delusion creating powers of Brahm) personified. The Sita Upanishad is the 9th Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, and it describes the metaphysical importance of Sita. She was the daughter of king Janak. She is also known as 'Vaidehi' meaning the daughter of Videha, another name of Janak as well as the kingdom where he ruled.

Regarding the story of the birth of Sita, it is narrated in Adbhut Ramayan, Canto 8, verse nos. 36-44. This Ramayan is purported to have been written by sage Valmiki. Sita's father Janak had no heirs. He was advised by sages to perform a fire-sacrifice. While the ground was being prepared for the altar of the sacred fire, the head of the plough got stuck into a pot buried in the ground. When it was taken out, it

was discovered that it contained an infant girl. In the beginning the king thought that this was a bad omen, but his royal priest and other sages who had assembled there advised him that this girl would give him immense fame and a chance to meet the Supreme Lord. Since this lovely girl was discovered when the ploughshare got stuck in the ground, she was named 'Sita'—meaning precisely this, the 'tip or edge of the ploughshare'.

It is also narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, in its Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-to-75.

Again, since Sita was born from the Mother Earth, she was also regarded as the daughter of Prithivi (earth). Earth is regarded as the foot of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-encompassing vast form of the Supreme Being. This is why Laxmi, whose incarnation was Sita, is invariably depicted to be seated near the feet of Lord Vishnu, another name of the Viraat Purush. It was this Lord Vishnu who had manifested himself as Lord Ram of Ayodhya to whom Sita was married. This is natural to expect because Laxmi is the eternal divine consort of Vishnu.

Prayers for Sita are included in Tulsidas' wonderful book of hymns known as 'Vinai Patrika', as verse nos. 41-42.]

Verse no. 48:

मैथिलः सपदि सत्यसंगरो राघवाय तनयामयोनिजाम्।

संनिधौ द्युतिमतस्तपोनिधे रग्निसाक्षिक इवातिसृष्टवान्॥ ११-४८

maithilah sapadi satyasamgaro rāghavāya tanayāmayonijām |
sannidhau dyutimatastaponidhe ragnisākṣika ivātisṛṣṭavān || 11-48

11-48. King Janak, who was renowned for his trustworthiness and was a strict keeper of his promises, gave his daughter Sita to Lord Ram in marriage with the illustrious and venerated sage Vishwamitra, who had the same purity as possessed by the fire, as a witness to this wedding ritual in the same way as one makes the sacred fire a witness during a formal marriage ceremony.

[Note--King Janak did not want to waste time by waiting till the formality of an elaborate marriage ceremony could be arranged. He was very eager to wed his loving daughter to Lord Ram who had charmed the king much and made him eager to somehow marry his daughter with the Lord as outlined earlier in verse no. 38.

Once the symbolic marriage was solemnised with sage Vishwamitra as a witness, king Janak felt relieved, as the honourable sage standing witness to this relationship was as sacred and sanctified as it would be with the holy fire as a witness.

Another factor that played in the mind of king Janak in making haste to formalise the marriage of his daughter with Lord Ram was the possibility of defeated kings forming an alliance to launch an attack to create an obstacle to block Lord Ram's marriage with Sita as an act of vengeance ignited by jealousy and humiliation that they had faced. The king knew that with sage Vishwamitra firmly on his side, no king would ever be stupid enough to commit such an error out of fear of inviting the sage's wrath.]

Verse no. 49:

प्राहिणोच्च महितम् महाद्युतिः कोसलाधिपतये पुरोधसम्।
भृत्यभावि दुहितुः परिग्रहात् दिश्यताम् कुलमिदम् निमेरिति॥ ११-४९

prāhiṇocca mahitam mahādyutiḥ kosalādhīpataye purodhasam |
bhr̥tyabhāvi duhituḥ parigrahātdīśyatām kulamidam nimeriti || 11-49

11-49. The illustrious king Janak summoned his royal priest named Shatanand and sent him as his messenger to the great king Dashrath with a polite request that the latter accept Sita as his daughter-in-law to grant the family of Nimi (to which Janak belonged) the honour of having a privileged relationship with the great dynasty to which king Dashrath belonged.

The message read: "Oh great king! Please accept my respects. I beg you to kindly be gracious upon me to accept my daughter Sita as your daughter-in-law. Please give me this honour to serve you and your great family by granting me your grace in the same way as you show kindness towards your servants."

Verse no. 50:

अन्वियेष सदृशीम् स च स्नुषाम् प्राप चैनमनुकूलवाग्दिवजः।
सद्य एव सुकृताम् हि पच्यते कल्पवृक्षफलधर्मि काङ्क्षितम्॥ ११-५०

anviyeṣa sadr̥śīm sa ca snuṣām prāpa cainamanukūlavāgdvijah |
sadya eva sukr̥tām hi pacyate kalpavṛkṣaphaladharmi kāṅkṣitam || 11-50

11-50. Meanwhile, king Dashrath was contemplating about having an honourable daughter-in-law in the family (i.e. he was thinking of marrying his sons one-by-one as they had become adults). It was during such moments of contemplation that news came that king Janak's royal priest Shatanand has come with a message from his patron that would fulfil king Dashrath's wish.

This was indeed in line with the maxim that those who are good get good rewards and have their wishes fulfilled just like the Kalpa Tree, the all wish-fulfilling tree of heaven, ensures that the wishes of those who are meritorious, righteous, truthful and honourable are fulfilled.

Verse no. 51:

तस्य कल्पितपुरस्क्रियाविधेः शुश्रुवान्वचनमग्रजन्मनः।
उच्चचाल बलभित्सखो वशी सैन्यरेणुमुषितार्कदीधितिः॥ ११-५१

tasya kalpitapuraskriyāvidheḥ śuśruvānvacanamagrajanmanah |
uccacāla balabhitsakho vaśī sainyareṇumuṣitārkadīdhitiḥ || 11-51

11-51. King Dashrath, who was a friend of Indra, the king of heaven, warmly welcomed king Janak's messenger Shatanand. When he heard the Brahmin's (i.e. Shatanand's) message on behalf of king Janak, the thrill and exhilaration of king Dashrath knew no bounds (because this message fulfilled his wish regarding which he was contemplating for a long time).

The king made all preparations and departed for Janak's place with Shatanand. He was accompanied by such a huge marriage party and an equally huge army that the dust kicked up by their march formed such a dense cloud that it hid the sun from view.

Verse no. 52:

**आससाद मिथिलाम् स वेष्टयन् पीडितोपवनपादपाम् बलैः।
प्रीतिरोधमसहिष्ट सा पुरी स्त्रीव कान्तपरिभोगमायतम्॥ ११-५२**

āśasāda mithilām sa veṣṭayan pīditopavanapādapām balaiḥ |
prītirodhamasahiṣṭa sā purī strīva kāntaparibhogamāyatam || 11-52

11-52. King Dashrath reached the outskirts of Mithila (Janakpur). The trees and gardens surrounding the peaceful city were scarred and bruised by the arrival of such a huge and excited army when it camped all around its outskirts. Though it looked like a seize from a foreign army, yet it was not a hostile but a friendly army led by its king Dashrath who had come at the invitation of their own king Janak.

So therefore, instead of feeling annoyed, the citizens rejoiced at their arrival and enjoyed interacting with them just like a lady enjoys the roughness of her lover just before they have intercourse as she feels pleased with those gestures which are intended to arouse her passions rather than actually harming her in any way.

[Note--We must always keep in mind that Kalidas was a poet par-excellence who wrote with a liberal mind and a flourish of the pen, and he had no reservations in describing explicit scenes or using metaphors and analogies that often times blurred the boundary between the exotica and the erotica. Nonetheless, the beauty of Kalidas' compositions are unmatched, and his ability to use metaphors and analogies so fluently in virtually every verse is what sets him apart from other poets, and makes his writing both fascinating and exquisite.]

Verse no. 53:

**तौ समेत्य समये स्थितावुभौ भूपती वरुणवासवोपमौ।
कन्यकातनयकौतुकक्रियाम् स्वप्रभावसदृशीम् वितेनतुः॥ ११-५३**

tau sametya samaye sthitāvubhau bhūpatī varuṇavāsavopamau |
kanyakātanayakautukakriyām svaprabhāvasadr̥śīm vitenatuḥ || 11-53

11-53. The two great kings (i.e. Janak and Dashrath), who resembled the two great heavenly lords such as Indra (the king of gods and heaven) and Varun (the patron god of water, including the oceans), joined hands to do the rituals and ceremonies needed for the marriage of their daughters and sons respectively in accordance with their royal status, and in a way that was appropriate for their regal grandeur.

Verse no. 54:

पार्थिवीमुदवहद्रघूद्वहो लक्ष्मणस्तदनुजामथोर्मिलाम्।

यौ तयोरवरजौ वरौजसौ तौ कुशध्वजसुते सुमध्यमे॥ ११-५४

pārthivīmudavahadraghūdvaḥo lakṣmaṇastadanujāmāthormilām |
yau tayloravarajau varaujasau tau kuśadhvajāsute sumadhyame || 11-54

11-54. Lord Ram, who was the glory of king Raghu's lineage, was married to Sita, and his younger brother Laxman was married to Sita's younger sister named Urmila.

Their two younger brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, were married respectively to Mandavi and Srutkirti who were daughters of Kushdwaj, the younger brother of king Janak.

Verse no. 55:

ते चतुर्थसहितास्त्रयो बभुः सूनवो नववधूपरिग्रहाः।

सामदानविधिभेदनिग्रहाः सिद्धिमन्त इव तस्य भूपतेः॥ ११-५५

te caturthasahitāstrayo babhuḥ sūnavo navavadhūparigrahāḥ |
sāmadānavidhibhedanigrahāḥ siddhimanta iva tasya bhūpateḥ || 11-55

11-55. The four sons of king Dashrath looked glorious with their respective wives by their sides as if the great king had got the reward in the form of success in carrying out all his royal duties and political endeavours by employing the four principles of polity such as Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda¹.

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 84 of Chapter 10 of Raghuvansham where these four principles have been explained. In this referred verse, the four brothers are likened to the four principles of Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda.

Now in the current verse, king Dashrath's happiness is compared to the success one achieves by implementing these four cardinal principles of political science in practical life. If his four sons stood for these four cardinal principles, then with their wives by their sides, it was like these four principles bearing fruits or showing rewards by their successful application.

Every father wishes that his sons get married and his daughters-in-law are good ladies of noble character. There is no better happiness for the father if this wish of his is granted, as was the case with Dashrath.]

Verse no. 56:

ता नराधिपसुता नृपात्मजैः ते च ताभिरगमन्कृतार्थताम्।

सोऽभवद्वरवधूसमागमः प्रत्ययप्रकृतियोगसंनिभः॥ ११-५६

tā narādhipasutā nrpātmajaiḥ te ca tābhiragamankṛtārthatām |
so'bhavadvavaravadhūsamāgamaḥ pratyayaprakṛtiyogasannibhaḥ || 11-56

11-56. The union of the four royal princesses of king Janak's household with the four royal princes of king Dashrath's household made all the four couples exhilarated and

fulfilled, as if the word 'marriage' itself had achieved its true meaning with the four bridegrooms and their respective four groom coming together in an unbreakable union. It is like the case of a word having a meaning only when its constituent letters are brought together, because otherwise the individual letters, that together form any given word, do not have any independent meaning of their own.

[Note--Any word acquires a comprehensible or intelligible meaning when its constituent letters are written together, and that also in a sensible order or sequence. The word would be no such thing as a 'word' if these individual letters of the alphabet are not brought together. Further, any random assembly of letters would also not form a sensible word, and we would call such an assembly a 'spelling error' or a senseless jumble of letters.

Likewise, the auspicious word 'marriage' bore fruit when a conjugal union was established between the four princes of king Dashrath and the four princesses of king Janak, and that also in a manner whereby the four grooms and the four brides fitted in well with each other with perfect harmony.]

Verse no. 57:

**एवमात्तरतिरात्मसंभवां तान्निवेश्य चतुरोऽपि तत्र सः।
अध्वसु त्रिषु विसृष्टमैथिलः स्वाम् पुरीम् दशरथो न्यवर्तत॥ ११-५७**

evamāttaratirātmasaṁbhavāṁ tānniveśya caturō'pi tatra saḥ |
adhvasu triṣu viśṛṣṭamāithilāḥ svām purīm daśaratho nyavartata || 11-57

11-57. King Dashrath derived immense satisfaction by marrying all his four sons with four daughters of king Janak of Mithila at a single venue. After completion of attendant ceremonies and rituals, king Dashrath departed for his capital of Ayodhya with the marriage party.

King Janak accompanied him till a distance covered in three days during which both the royal parties pitched camps for the night. After that, king Dashrath politely requested king Janak to return home, and bid the latter an affectionate and warm good-bye before resuming his journey home to his capital.

Verse no. 58:

**तस्य जातु मरुतः प्रतीपगा वर्त्मसु ध्वजतरुप्रमाथिनः।
चिक्लिशुर्भृशतया वरूथिनीम् उत्तटा इव नदीरयाः स्थलीम्॥ ११-५८**

tasya jātu marutaḥ pratīpagā vartmasu dhvajatarupramāthinaḥ |
ciklīśurbhṛśatayā varūthinīm uttata iva nadīrayāḥ sthālīm || 11-58

11-58. One day, a strong wind swept in as the army of king Dashrath marched home, and made the royal flags and banners of king Dashrath's army flutter violently atop their shafts just as a strong storm would shake the trees and their leaves violently in a forest, or turbulent currents of a river in spate would overflow its banks and cause havoc in its surrounding areas.

Verse no. 59:

लक्ष्यते स्म तदनन्तरम् रविः बद्धभीमपरिवेषमण्डलः।

वैनतेयशमितस्य भोगिनो भोगवेष्टित इव च्युतो मणिः॥ ११-५९

lakṣyate sma tadanantaram raviḥ baddhabhīmapariveṣamaṇḍalaḥ |
vainateyaśamitasya bhogino bhogaveṣṭita iva cyuto maṇiḥ || 11-59

11-59. Thereafter, a halo surrounded the bright disc of the sun and gave the impression that when Garud (the celestial Eagle) had attacked a giant serpent, the jewel on the hood of this serpent got dislodged, but the serpent, even though wounded, coiled its body around its fallen jewel to protect it.

[Note--Here in this analogy, the sun is compared to the illuminated jewel on the hood of the serpent, and the halo around it to the coiled body of the serpent. In mythology and folklore, it is believed that there is a class of serpents who carry an illuminated gem on their hoods. This gem glows in the dark of the night, showing the serpent light as it seeks its prey. This type of snake is called the Indian Cobra (naja naja), and the gem on its hood is called the 'Naga Mani'. It is actually an effervescent secretion with fluorescent qualities that effuses from the snake's body and collects in a transparent sac on its hood.

From a modern viewpoint, when the storm arose, a huge cloud of dust was kicked up which dulled the clarity of the blue sky and blurred the sun. When viewed from the ground it looked as if a halo or a ring has formed around the disc of the sun. The brightness of the sun too faded due to the dust, just like the case of the jewel on the serpent's hood becoming dirty and losing its brightness when it falls on the ground after Garud attacks the serpent.]

Verse no. 60:

श्येनपक्षपरिधूसरालकाः सांध्यमेघरुधिरार्द्रवाससः।

अङ्गना इव रजस्वला दिशो नो बभूवुरवलोकनक्षमाः॥ ११-६०

śyenapakṣaparidhūsarālakāḥ sām̐dhyamegharudhirārdravāsasaḥ |
aṅganā iva rajasvalā diśo no babhūvuravalokanakṣamāḥ || 11-60

11-60. The evening looked hideous and foreboding with its four directions appearing dull and grey as if a large bird-of-prey, such as a vulture or an eagle, is arriving, with its wings spread wide to hide the sunlight, to devour its prey, and the ochre colour of the atmosphere (caused by the dust through which the light of the setting sun was viewed) resembled the blood-soaked clothes of a menstruating woman whose sight is a taboo and not worth seeing.

{The whole atmosphere presented a ominous look as if some grave event was about to happen. Obviously, king Dashrath became alarmed as it was a bad omen, especially when he was returning home with a marriage party of his sons and their wives.}

Verse no. 61:

भास्करश्च दिशमध्युवास याम् ताम् श्रिताः प्रतिभयम् ववासिरे।
क्षत्रशोणितपितृक्रियोचितम् चोदयन्त्य इव भार्गवम् शिवाः॥ ११-६१

bhāskaraśca diśamadhyuvāsa yām tām śritāḥ pratibhayam vavāsire |
kṣatraśoṇitapitr̥kriyocitam codayantya iva bhārgavam śivāḥ || 11-61

11-61. In the direction where the sun was present during the evening prior to sunset (i.e. in the western horizon), female jackals were crying terribly with a blood-curdling howl as if women of the Kshatriya race were calling out Parashuram who was accustomed to kill male Kshatriyas and offer their blood to his father as oblation.

[Note--Sage Parashuram was an inveterate hater of the warrior Kshatriya class. The howling of jackals is a very bad omen, especially in the evening and night as it portends danger and death.

Parashuram is also known as 'Ram with a battle-axe'. The legendary story associated with him is very interesting, and it is as follows:

He is regarded as the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdagni and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Shursena, also known as 'Sahastraarjun' because he had a thousand arms. He was the son of Kaartavirya-Arjuna. The story in brief is as follows:—

There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as 'Sahastraarjun' or 'Arjun with a thousand hands'. Once he approached the Ocean and asked who was stronger than him. The Ocean told him that sage Jamdagni's son Parashuram was a fit match for him and would welcome him in battle. Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. {This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat's Ashwamedhik Parva.}

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriyas to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

A slight variation of this story appears in Mahabharat, Vanparva. According to this version, when the thousand-armed king known as 'Sahastraarjun' had taken away Jamdagni's all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu, Parashuram rushed to cut all the arms of Sahastraarjun as punishment. Sahastraarjun's kith and kin came back to the hermitage of Jamdagni when Parashuram was not there, and took revenge by killing the sage. Parashuram's mother grieved and wailed. When Parashuram came back and discovered what had happened, he promised his mother that he would take revenge, and vowed to kill all the Kshatriya kings on the surface of the earth to avenge Sahastraarjun's killing of his father. So in this way he had also fulfilled the wishes of his mother.

This fact that Parashuram had avenged his father's death by killing the Kshatriya kings because one of the members of this race, king Sahastraarjun, had killed his father sage Jamdagni, is lauded by Lord Ram in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 76, verse no. 2.

In *Mahabharat*, Shantiparva, Canto 49, verse nos. 45-47 it is mentioned that it was Sahastraarjun's son who had stolen the Kamdhenu cow, and not Sahastraarjun himself.

It ought to be noted that 'Sahastraarjun' is also known as 'Sahastrabaahu' because he had a thousand arms.

Now, after unnecessarily killing so many innocent Kshatriya kings, who had committed no offence, just to avenge his father's death at the hands of Sahastraarjun, sage Parashuram was severely criticized by the community of Brahmins, which made the sage contrite and full of guilt. So, with a somber and disgusted mood, he went to the forest to do penance. At that time, sage Vishwamitra's grandson named Paraavasru came to him and teased him, saying, 'A fire sacrifice was done recently in which so many countless Kshatriya kings had come. But you did not kill any of them, thereby disobeying the promise you had made to your mother and have also violated your own vows. This is a sin in itself.' Peeved and instigated, Parashuram rose immediately and went berserk, killing and hacking all the kings and their kith and kin at random. Their pregnant wives somehow escaped by hiding here and there. After this, Parashuram performed a Horse Sacrifice known as the 'Ashwamedh Yajya', and gave the entire land (earth) that he had snatched from the kings to sage Kashyap as donation or gift during this sacrifice.

Sage Kashyap was wise, and he was worried that if some way out is not found then one day Parashuram will create such a situation by repeatedly killing kings that there would be no one to take care of the creatures who inhabit the planet, because the main function of the Kshatriya kings was to look after the welfare of the subjects of their kingdoms and protect the earth from marauding savages.

So Kashyap told Parashuram, 'Now that you have given me this earth as a gift, it belongs to me, and henceforth you have no right to kill any of its inhabitants (including of course the kings). You go to the shore of the southern ocean and do Tapa there.' After this, Parashuram lived on the shore of the southern ocean during the day, and left the earth during the night.

This version of the story is clearly mentioned in *Valmiki Ramayan*, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 25-26, and Canto 76, verse nos. 13-14.

While normally the killing of the Kshatriya kings repeatedly by sage Parashuram seems to be a taint on his saintly and hermit-like life and upbringing, there is a profound philosophy behind it. Now let us examine it.

As time passed, by and by, the Kshatriya class had become very haughty and arrogant because all physical powers and military strength were vested in it. The king's treasury was supposed to be a common pool where the society could keep its wealth that it generates by toil, and the king was merely its custodian. But as time passed, the kings began to treat this treasury as their personal property, and while they rolled in luxury the peasant class, the working class that toiled day in and day out to generate this wealth hadn't a square meal to dump in their empty tummies and a roof to cover them against the vagaries of cruel Nature. Though the powers and wealth of the Kshatriya class were meant for the welfare of the society as a whole, more often than not these elements went to the head of kings, making them arrogant, haughty, exploitative and insensitive towards others.

We read about an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in the form of sage Parashuram who had eliminated the Kshatriya race several times over by killing them and handing over the earth to the Brahmins. The elimination of such wild kings belonging to the Kshatriya Varna who had deviated from their duties and moral responsibilities that were ordained by ancient sages and seers became obligatory for the Supreme Lord of the world as the Lord was the Father of all, and he could not bear with one of his offsprings making others suffer because of his own pervert behaviour and selfishness. Hence, the Lord assumed the form of sage Parashuram to teach a lesson to such wicked kings who had fallen from their paths.

Killing such Kshatriya kings and restoring the earth to Brahmins should be viewed in this context; it has a great symbolic meaning. Whenever evil tendencies and negativity rises in this world, be it in the guise of demons or kings, the Lord comes down to set the house in order. This is the reason why sage Parashuram is regarded as one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world.

The logical spin-off of this is that Lord Ram and sage Parashuram are both the same Lord in different roles. What Lord Ram did for the welfare of sages and the humble creatures of the world by killing their tormentor demons led by Ravana of Lanka, sage Parashuram did the same thing by killing arrogant and wicked Kshatriya kings and handing over the world to pious and holy men known as Brahmins.

The fact that sage Parashuram had repeatedly killed the Kshatriya kings and handed the earth over to Brahmins is mentioned in Tulsidas' epic story of *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 272

The *Shiva-Puran* has narrated the story of sage Parashuram as follows—

There was a king named Gadhi. His daughter was named Satyavati. Satyavati was married to the sage Richika. Richika arranged for a spectacular sacrifice. Some rice pudding was obtained from the yajna and Richika gave it to his wife Satyavati.

He said, 'Split this rice pudding into two halves. Eat half yourself and give the remaining half to your mother. Here, let me divide it. This is your half and that is your mother's. We are Brahmins. So we will have a son who will display the traits of a Brahmin. Your father is a Kshatriya, and your mother will have a son who will behave like a Kshatriya.'

Saying this, Richika went off to meditate in the forest. But mother and daughter managed to mix up their halves. In the course of his meditations, Richika

realized that Satyavati was going to give birth to a Brahmin son who would display Kshatriya traits.

Through his powers, he managed to postpone this birth by a generation. So Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni. It was Jamadagni's son Parashuram who exhibited all the Kshatriya like characteristics.

Gadhi's son was Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra was born a Kshatriya. But because of the mixing up of the rice pudding, Vishvamitra turned out to be Brahmin-like.

There was a king of the Haihaya dynasty named Arjun. He had a thousand arms. He had also obtained the boon that flaming fire itself would be perpetually present on the tip of his arrow. Whenever he shot an arrow, the fire from the tip of the arrow burnt up the target. In this fashion, Arjuna used to burn up villages, cities and forests. He once burnt up the hermitages of sages. And one of the sages cursed Arjun that he would be killed by Parashuram.

Parashurama learnt the art of fighting from Shiva himself. While Parashuram was away learning how to fight, Arjuna arrived in Jamadagni's hermitage. Jamadagni had a wonderful cow (dhenu), known as a kamadhenu because it produced whatever objects one asked (Kama) from it. Using this Kamadhenu, Jamadagni treated Arjun and his entree retinue to a royal feast.

Arjun asked Jamadangi to give him this cow, but the sage refused. Arjun then asked his soldiers to forcibly take away the cow. But just as this was going on, Parashuram arrived. He killed Arjun, slicing off Arjun's thousand arms in the process.

Having disposed of Arjun, Parashuram went off to meditate and pay another visit to Shiva.

Taking advantage of Parashuram's absence, Arjun's sons invaded Jamadagni's hermitage. They killed Jamadagni. When Parashurama returned, he exacted vengeance for this evil deed. He killed Arjuna's sons. Since Arjuna and his sons happened to be Kshatriyas, Parashuram also killed all the Kshatriyas in the world. He did this not once, but twenty-one times over. Why twenty-one times? The reason was that there were twenty-one weapon-marks on the dead Jamadagni's body.

But killing was a crime and Parashuram had committed a sin. As penance, Parashuram donated cows and performed a lot of Tapa. He also arranged an Ashvamedha Yagya, the great horse-sacrifice. All this did not prove to be atonement enough. To complete the penance, Parashuram sought the advice of the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa told him to perform the donation that is known as Tulaa-Purush. A Tula (or 'Tulaa-danda') is a pair of scales; the person (Purush) who is performing the donation is placed on one side of the weighing scale. On the other side are placed objects like honey, clarified butter, molasses, clothing and gold. The weight of the objects being donated has to be equal to the weight of the person performing the donation. This is known as 'Tulaa-purush'. Parashuram performed Tulaa-purusha and was freed from his sin.

In Tulsidas' epic "Ram Charit Manas", Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268, sage Parashuram is called "Bhrigu-pati Kamal Patangaa", which literally means 'the lord in the family of sage Bhrigu (Bhrigu-pati), one who was like the sun (Patangaa) with respect to this family representing a lotus (Kamal)'. The metaphor of 'the sun and the lotus flower' is used to mean that Parashuram gave great fame and glory to this family of great sages who felt happy that he was a member of their race just like the lotus flower that feels so happy when the sun rises in the sky that it opens its petals to indicate its joy at the sight of the sun.]

Verse no. 62:

तत्प्रतीपपवनादिवैकृतम् प्रेक्ष्य शान्तिमधिकृत्य कृत्यविद्।
अन्वयुङ्क्त गुरुमीश्वरः क्षितेः स्वन्तमित्यलघयत्स तद्व्यथाम्॥ ११-६२

tatpratīpapavanādivaikṛtam prekṣya śāntimadhikṛtya kṛtyavid |
anvayurṅkta gurumīśvaraḥ kṣiteḥ svantamityalaghayatsa tadvyathām || 11-62

11-62. Upon observing ill-omens such as a violent storm, red sky, howling of jackals etc, king Dashrath was very alarmed. Confused, he did not know what to make of these signs and how to overcome any unfavourable situation that may arise as a consequence. So he consulted his royal priest, sage Vashistha. The wise sage who could see the future, however, assured the king that he need not worry, saying that after some initial problems, all will end well. Sage Vashistha's assurance alleviated king Dashrath's worries to a great extent as he had great faith in the sage from experience.

[Note--King Dashrath had a long experience with sage Vashistha which had taught him that the sage's advise had never been wrong. Hence, when the sage advised the king to remain calm as no harm would come due these bad signs, the latter felt relieved.]

Verse no. 63:

तेजसः सपदि राशिरुत्थितः प्रादुरास किल वाहिनीमुखे।
यः प्रमृज्य नयनानि सैनिकैः लक्षणीयपुरुषाकृतिश्चिरात्॥ ११-६३

tejasaḥ sapadi rāśirutthitaḥ prādurāsa kila vāhinīmukhe |
yaḥ pramṛjya nayanāni sainikaiḥ lakṣaṇīyapuruṣākṛtiścīrāt || 11-63

11-63. All of a sudden, there appeared before the army a figure so dazzlingly bright that it blinded the soldiers. They rubbed their eyes and blinked to clear their vision. After their eyes became accustomed to the surroundings, they saw a male figure resembling a great sage.

Verse no. 64:

पित्र्यमंशमुपवीतलक्षणम् मातृकम् च धनुरुर्जितम् दधत्।
यः ससोम इव घर्मदीधितिः सद्विजिह्व इव चन्दनद्रुमः॥ ११-६४

pitryamaṁśamupavītalakṣaṇam mātṛkam ca dhanurūrjitam dadhat |
yaḥ sasoma iva gharmadīdhitih sadvijihva iva candanadrumah || 11-64

11-64. That radiant figure of a sage wore a sacred thread slung across one of his shoulders, implying he was a Brahmin, because his father was also a Brahmin. A strong bow hung from his other shoulder, implying that he had the blood of the warrior class, i.e. the Kshatriya race, in him too, because his mother was a Kshatriya.

In this state, the figure of the sage appeared to present a contrasting sight: it was as if the blazing sun and the calm moon coexisted in him, or as a venom-spitting serpent was coiled around the cool stem of the sandalwood tree.

[Note--The figure of the sage was as radiant as the sun, and his angry countenance resembled the fire radiating out of the sun, and the bow represented the strength and power that he possessed, indicating that he does not tolerate any opposition.

On the other hand, the sacred thread that he wore represented the calmness and peace that Brahmins usually have, qualities associated with the moon.

In a similar way, the serpent is vicious and its venom is fiery, while the sandalwood is regarded as cool and soothing, which is why its paste is applied to cool and calm the body.

These two opposite and contrasting examples show how Kalidas expertly employed the figure of speech called 'oxymoron' to drive home a point. Here it is meant to emphasise that when Parashuram became annoyed, his anger and wrath had the ability to scorch and destroy anything like the heat of the sun and the venom of a serpent. But when his initial burst of anger subsided, then his true nature as a forgiving sage and a peaceful Brahmin came to the fore, for he became calm and soothing like the moon and the sandalwood tree.]

Verse no. 65:

येन रोषपरुषात्मनः पितुः शासने स्थितिभिदोऽपि तस्थुषा।
वेपमानजननीशिरश्छिदा प्रागजीयत घृणा ततो मही॥ ११-६५

yena roṣaparuṣātmanāḥ pituḥ śāsane sthitibhido'pi tasthuṣā |
vepamānajanānīśiraśchidā prāgajīyata ghrṇā tato mahī || 11-65

11-65. To obey his intemperate father (Jamdagni)--who had become mad with anger and so enraged that he had become blind to the probity and propriety of his irrational actions and the consequences of the orders he was about to give his son (Parashuram)--he (i.e. Parashuram) had no compunctions or second thoughts in cutting-off the head of his mother Renuka who was trembling with fear and pleading for mercy. One can well imagine the stone-like sternness and the stubbornness of such a person's heart.

At the time when he (Parashuram) had decapitated his mother, he had first overcome the natural resistance that a person's conscience offers in trying to stop him when he is about to commit such a heinous crime, and then the sense of guilt of actually having done it. After this event, he had become so furious that he unilaterally conquered the earth by slaying all the members of his mother's race, i.e. the Kshatriyas.

[Note--When Parashuram had gone on the offensive against the Kshatriya race, he had forgotten that he was supposed to be 'Brahmin sage', who is deemed to be calm, polite, peace-loving, humble, righteous, and careful with his deeds and actions to ensure they are not cruel and do not violate Dharma. Killing one's mother is never something to boast about. Obedience to one's father does not give one the licence to become reckless. But except this wrong-doing on his part of killing his own mother, which may have made him lose the balance of his mind and become blood-thirsty,

there is some justification in why Parashuram went on the rampage against the entire Kshatriya race.

This warrior race had gone out of hands; they had become arrogant, haughty, cruel and reckless. Since Brahmins had no means to counter the Kshatriyas as they did not want to pick up arms as it would be against their principles to abhor violence, and the other two races, i.e. the trading class known as the Vaishyas, and the service class known as the Sudras, did not have the courage and the wherewithal to counter the ruthlessness of the Kshatriyas, the natural law of justice as envisioned by the Creator came into play to restore the balance--i.e. to save the innocent and punish the guilty. Since the Brahmins were supposed to be the guardians of this law of natural justice as established by the Creator, they had the moral duty to enforce it. And since the Kshatriyas had gone out of their control, so it had become necessary that someone who was sage with the qualities of a warrior would pick up the cudgel to finish the task. And this onus fell on the shoulders of Parashuram.

So therefore, from a broader perspective viewed against the backdrop of the conditions prevalent during those times, sage Parashuram was merely carrying out his mandate of reining in the reckless Kshatriyas when he decided to trounce their pride of invincibility by defeating and eliminating them from earth.

But then again, complete annihilation of the Kshatriyas from earth for all times to come would have disrupted the structure of the society in the long run, so it became necessary to restore them, but in a more restrained form. This explains why many great kings who were well-behaved and righteous thrived even in the presence of Parashuram. We have examples of kings Dashrath and Janak.

Further, by this time, Parashuram had exhausted the stupendous powers he had accumulated by the virtue of his penances and austerities, as by his relentless campaign of slaying Kshatriyas he had committed grave sins which burnt all his spiritual merits, making him like a dumb cannon ball. This will soon become evident when all his fretting and fuming angrily cut no ice and had no effect on Lord Ram, and in the end the sage appeared crestfallen and harmless like a defused bomb that had been rendered harmless.]

Verse no. 66:

अक्षबीजवलयेन निर्बभौ दक्षिणश्रवणसंस्थितेन यः।

क्षत्रियान्तकरणैकविंशतेः व्याजपूर्वगणनामिवोद्वहन्॥ ११-६६

akṣabījavalayena nirbabhau dakṣiṇaśravaṇasaṁsthithena yaḥ |
kṣatriyāntakaraṇaikaaviṁśateḥ vyājapūrvagaṇanāmivodvahan || 11-66

11-66. The figure of the sage that appeared before the army of king Dashrath had an earring consisting of twenty-one beads of Rudraksha seeds dangling from his ear as if he had kept count of the number of times he had eliminated the Kshatriyas by the number of beads in his earring.

[Note--Rudraksha is an auspicious tree associated with Lord Shiva. Its botanical name is *Elaeocarpus ganitrus*. The word 'Rudraksha' has two parts--viz. 'Rudra' which refers to Lord Shiva, and 'Aksha' meaning eye. Therefore, these beads represent tears from Lord Shiva's eyes--this is mentioned in Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 7, verse no. 8. It is said to enhance positive energy, ward off evil, help in spiritual growth, and

promote good luck, health and prosperity. Rudraksha beads are used in prayer rosaries.]

Verse no. 67:

तम् पितुर्वधभवेन मन्युना राजवंशनिधनाय दीक्षितम्।

बालसूनुरवलोक्य भार्गवम् स्वाम् दशाम् च विषसाद पार्थिवः॥ ११-६७

tam piturvadhabhavana manyunā rājavamśanidhanāya dīkṣitam |
bālasūnuravalokya bhārgavam svām daśām ca viṣasāda pāṛthivah || 11-67

11-67. When king Dashrath saw that the furious figure standing before him was that of sage Parashuram, he was mighty frightened as the sage was reputed to have become so angry at the killing of his father Jamdagni that he had taken a vow of eliminating all the kingly class representing the Kshatriya race from the surface of the earth, because king Dashrath too belonged to this race. Further, his four sons were too young at present to defend themselves against the wrath of this mighty warrior-sage. This situation caused immense worry and perplexity in the mind of king Dashrath as he did not know what would happen next.

Verse no. 68:

नाम राम इति तुल्यमात्मजे वर्तमानमहिते च दारुणे।

हृदयमस्य भयदायि चाभवद् रत्नजातमिव हारसर्पयोः॥ ११-६८

nāma rāma iti tulyamātmaje vartamānamahite ca dāruṇe |
hr̥dyamasya bhayadāyi cābhavad ratnajātamiva hārasarpayoḥ || 11-68

11-68. The word 'Ram' was the name of his eldest son as well as was an integral part of the sage's name Parashuram (Parashu + Ram = Parashu-ram). This was a fascinating coincidence, and the fact that the word 'Ram' stood for divinity, calmness, joy and spiritual peace, it gave some solace to the king because the sage would find an image of himself being reflected in his son Ram, and this would act as a deterrent for the sage and prevent him from taking any rash action¹.

The same word 'Ram' being the name of his son as well as being an integral part of the sage's name Parashuram presented a contrasting picture of fearlessness and joy represented by Lord Ram, king Dashrath's son, and of fear and terror as represented by sage Parashuram just like the case of a 'Mani' (gem) being a welcome source of joy and prosperity when it is present in a garland worn by someone around his neck, or is a source of fear when it is seen on the hood of a venomous snake².

[Note--¹The word 'Ram' symbolised peace and joy as it was the name of the personified form of the Supreme Being. But the same word causes fear when it is included as a part of another name with a prefix of an 'axe' as was the case with the sage's name, which was Parashu (axe)-Ram. So therefore, when the sage faces Lord Ram, he would see his 'own image' in the Lord by the virtue of the word 'Ram' and feel ashamed that inspite of having such a holy word in his name, he has brought condemnation and sinfulness upon himself because of the prefix 'Parash' meaning an

axe that only kills instead of giving peace and happiness. By introspection, the sage would perhaps regret his past deeds and feel ashamed of himself. This means he would abandon his aggressiveness and become placid.

The fact that sage Parashuram could see his own image in Lord Ram is a matter of fact which would be evident when we read verse nos. 77-80 and the note appended to verse no. 80. This is because sage Parashuram and Lord Ram were both incarnations of Lord Vishnu, which proves that the sage saw his own image being reflected in Lord Ram.

As we proceed with our reading, we would also see that when sage Parashuram actually came face-to-face with Lord Ram, then instead of dashing angrily at the Lord with his battle-axe drawn, he would stall mid-step and only spoke angrily with Lord Ram. Why so? What prevented him from lunging at the Lord whom he saw as his adversary and someone to be punished, especially when the adversary was a prince of the Kshatriya race with which the sage had an inveterate hatred?

The answer is apparent when we analyse the situation: When the sage saw Lord Ram, he observed that the latter was unruffled, calm, smiling and polite, which was quite contrary to the natural character and inborn instinct of a warrior, especially with one who has young blood running through his veins, for a true blue-blooded warrior of the Kshatriya race would never tolerate someone threatening him for no fault of his, as Parashuram was doing presently. Lord Ram was neither angry nor agitated at the impertinent and rude behaviour of the sage.

In contrast, the sage, who was a Brahmin, was fretting and fuming angrily, pouring venom with his angry words and aggressive postures, something contrary to a Brahmin's nature and character, for a Brahmin is expected to be calm, polite, forgiving and peaceful. This acted as a break for sage Parashuram as he quietly pondered over this sharp contrast and silently felt ashamed of himself.

Further, both Lord Ram and sage Parashuram had the word 'Ram' representing their identity, with the sage's name having an added prefix 'Parashu' meaning an axe. When the sage saw Lord Ram standing before him, he was virtually seeing his own image in his adversary, but one that was scarred with ignominy as symbolised by the word 'Parashu', meaning an axe, in his own name, a word that stood for cruelty and terror, something a Brahmin should abhor.

In verse no. 73 herein below, the sage says that Lord Ram was trying to usurp his fame and glory, because the world would henceforth identify the Lord with the word 'Ram', and would forget the sage who also had this word as part of his name. Lord Ram would gradually be recognised for the virtues of valour, courage and strength, while the sage would begin to fade in oblivion and become de-recognised over time. So therefore, thought the sage, it was a worrying situation. If he willingly uses his axe to cut-off Lord Ram's head, he would symbolically cut-off the prefix of his own name with its other half--i.e. he would voluntarily cut-off the word 'Ram' from its prefix 'Parashu'. It would then completely obliterate him--because with the word 'Ram' out of the way, only the word Parashu would be left, and surely the name 'axe' is not something the sage would be proud of having!

²As for the example of the 'mani', the gem, cited in this verse, when it is worn as a jewel in a garland or necklace, it gives happiness and joy, but when it is present on the hood of a poisonous serpent it causes fear. No one would venture to examine and appreciate a serpent's mani, but all would like to do it with a mani studded in a necklace or a garland.]

Verse no. 69:

अर्घ्यमर्घ्यमिति वादिनम् नृपम् सोऽनवेक्ष्य भरताग्रजो यतः।

क्षत्रकोपदहनार्चिषम् ततः संदधे दृशमुदग्रतारकाम्॥ ११-६९

arghyamarghyamiti vādinam nṛpam so'navekṣya bharatāgrajo yataḥ |
kṣatrapadahanārciṣam tataḥ saṁdadhe dṛśamudagrātārakām || 11-69

11-69. Parashuram paid no heed to king Dashrath who was eagerly trying to placate the angry sage by repeatedly making him offerings befitting his stature to worship him, and instead turned his fiery eyes, from which flame-like angry gaze emanated, to stare wrathfully at Lord Ram.

Verse no. 70:

तेन कार्मुकनिषक्तमुष्टिना राघवो विगतभीः पुरोगतः।

अङ्गुलीविवरचारिणम् शरम् कुर्वता निजगदे युयुत्सुना॥ ११-७०

tena karmukaniṣaktamuṣṭinā rāghavo vigatabhīḥ purogataḥ |
aṅgulīvivaracāriṇam śaram kurvatā nijagade yuyutsunā || 11-70

11-70. Sage Parashuram gripped his bow in one hand and the arrow in the other hand as he readied himself for combat when he came face-to-face with Lord Ram, who stood before him fearlessly.

Verse no. 71:

क्षत्रजातमपकारवैरि मे तन्निहत्य बहुशः शमम् गतः।

सुप्तसर्प इव दण्डघट्टनात् रोषितोऽस्मि तव विक्रमश्रवात्॥ ११-७१

kṣatrajātamapakāravairi me tannihatya bahuśaḥ śamam gataḥ |
suptasarpa iva daṇḍaghaṭṭanāt roṣito'smi tava vikramaśravāt || 11-71

11-71. Parashuram burst out angrily: "The entire Kshatriya race is my enemy as they had been instrumental in my father's death. That is why I had eliminated them twenty-one times. But just as a serpent sleeping calmly is aroused and begins to hiss violently if it is stoked with a stick, in the like manner I have been aroused when I heard of your valour that you exhibited in Janakpur by breaking Shiva's bow.

{I had thought that all the Kshatriyas have been conquered by me, and none had the ardour, strength or courage to do some dare-devil deed like breaking a mighty bow. So when you broke the bow, it produced such a huge twang that it disturbed my meditation and disrupted my composure. I have come to judge you and bring you to book, and to tell you to mind yourself.}

Verse no. 72:

मैथिलस्य धनुरन्यपार्थिवैः त्वम् किलानमितपूर्वमक्षणोः।
तन्निशम्य भवता समर्थये वीर्यशृङ्गमिव भग्नमात्मनः॥ ११-७२

maithilasya dhanuranyapārthivaiḥ tvam kilānamitapūrvamakṣaṇoḥ |
tanniśamya bhavatā samarthaye vīryaśṛṅgamiva bhagnamātmanah || 11-72

11-72. The bow of king Janak could not be lifted and bent by any warrior. You have broken it. I have taken this act of yours as a personal affront because it looks to me as if you have caught me by my horn and challenged my fame as being the mightiest warrior, and have thereby tried to undermine my glory, strength and valour.

Verse no. 73:

अन्यदा जगति राम इत्ययम् शब्द उच्चरित एव मामगात्।
व्रीडमावहति मे स संप्रति व्यस्तवृत्तिरुदयोन्मुखे त्वयि॥ ११-७३

anyadā jagati rāma ityayam śabda uccarita eva māmagāt |
vrīḍamāvahati me sa saṁprati vyastavṛttirudayonmukhe tvayi || 11-73

11-73. Till now, the world associated the honourable word 'Ram' with me as it is part of my name. But now it appears that you wish to reverse it and usurp this privilege from me, because gradually the world would begin to associate this honourable word with you as you rise to prominence, with your fame and glory on the ascendance, and I would be sidelined. It would cause shame to me, and this situation is unacceptable for me.

Verse no. 74:

बिभ्रतोऽस्त्रमचलेऽप्यकुण्ठितम् द्वौ रूपं मम मतौ समागसौ।
धेनुवत्सहरणाच्च हैहयस्त्वम् च कीर्तिमपहर्तुमुद्यतः॥ ११-७४

bibhrato'stramacale'pyakuṇṭhitam dvau rūpū mama matau samāgasau |
dhenuvatsaharaṇācca haihaya stvam ca kīrtimaphartumudyataḥ || 11-74

11-74. My axe was not effected (scratched or blunted) when it hit mount Kronch¹. There have been no one yet who could muster the courage to confront me, except Sahatrarjun who had the temerity to snatch the Kamdhenu cow with its calf from my father Jamdagni². And you seem to be the second one who is determined to snatch my fame and undermine my glory as the mightiest warrior who has no match in this world, one whose feats cannot be replicated by any other warrior. You want to deprive me of my fame.

[Note--¹The story goes that when sage Parashuram was reclaiming land from the sea, an undersea hill called Kronch obstructed his path. It was then that he hit it with his axe to clear the path.

²This story has already been narrated as a note to verse no. 61 herein above.]

Verse no. 75:

क्षत्रियान्तकरणोऽपि विक्रमः तेन मामवति नाजिते त्वयि।
पावकस्य महिमा स गण्यते कक्षवज्जलति सागरेऽपि यः॥ ११-७५

kṣatriyāntakaraṇo'pi vikramaḥ tena māmavati nājite tvayi |
pāvakasya mahimā sa gaṇyate kakṣavajjalati sāgare'pi yaḥ || 11-75

11-75. This is why I will not be satisfied until I subdue you inspite of having vanquished the Kshatriyas twenty-one times. The glory and powers of the energy inherently present in the fire is praised only when it is capable of leaping up and heating the water of the ocean with as much ease as it does on a dry patch of grassland¹.

[Note--¹This is evident when we the undersea volcanoes erupt with such violence that they send plumes of hot water and gas rising up to the surface of the ocean. The power of the fire present in the bowls of the earth is also evident by the fact that the water of the ocean is warm enough to sustain a healthy marine life consisting of both flora and fauna. Although water by itself can extinguish the fire, but it fails to suppress the fire of the ocean bed. Then there are hot-water springs where the water literally boils. It is another evidence of the power of the fire to remain alive and active even when surrounded by its arch enemy, the water.]

Verse no. 76:

विद्धि चात्तबलमोजसा हरेः ऐश्वरम् धनुरभाजि यत्त्वया।
खातमूलमनिलो नदीरयैः पातयत्यपि मृदुस्तटद्रुमम्॥ ११-७६

viddhi cāttabalamojasā hareḥ aiśvaram dhanurabhāji yattvayā |
khātamūlamanilo nadīrayaiḥ pātayatyapi mṛdustaṭadrumam || 11-76

11-76. Admonishing Lord Ram, the enraged sage further said: "The bow of Lord Shiva that you had broken, an act of which you are so proud of, was nevertheless useless and devoid of any strength as Lord Vishnu had already deprived it of its original strength and glory. So therefore, what great feat have you achieved by breaking a thing that is already hollow and weakened from its core, just like the case of tree on the bank of a river whose roots have been made bare by erosion due to the water of the river that constantly cuts through the earth around the tree, leading the tree to topple over even with a low intensity breeze. Say, what great glory would the wind get by toppling over such a weakened tree which has lost its foothold on the ground? Say, what great achievement you claim for yourself by breaking an old and creaking bow?

{Likewise, what are you boasting about regarding breaking of a bow that has already lost its strength, density and resilience, that has already been weakened and rendered nothing but a hollow piece of wood from which its pith has been eroded. It is no more than a worthless reed that any child can easily lift and break.}

Verse no. 77:

तन्मदीयमिदमायुधम् ज्यया संगमय्य सशरम् विकृष्यताम्।
तिष्ठतु प्रधानमेवमप्यहम् तुल्यबाहुतरसा जितस्त्वया॥ ११-७७

tanmadiyamidamāyudham jyayā saṅgamayya saśaram vikṛṣyatām |
tiṣṭhatu pradhanamevamapyaham tulyabāhutarasā jitaṣtvayā || 11-77

11-77. Listen Ram! Before we enter into a combat, let me give you an option. Here is my own bow. If you can hold it, string it, and pull its string, then I would be convinced that you indeed have the same power and strength as I possess, and then I would let you off. I would deem myself as being vanquished by you, and then I would have no need to engage you in a actual combat. Otherwise, your fate is sealed.

[Note--This verse clearly indicates that when sage Parashuram met Lord Ram, his confidence was shaken. He doubted if he could subdue the Lord. So, to escape open humiliation in front of so many people, the sage thought of a wise escape route--viz. let Lord Ram hold and string the sage's bow and pull its string tight. If the Lord actually succeeds in it, then it would be better for the sage to avoid confronting him. This implies that earlier Parashuram had used threats and misused his position as a 'sage' and a 'Brahmin' to subdue kings and princes who would usually surrender to him in deference to his exalted stature of being a Brahmin and a sage. And then the sage would axe them. This situation had made Parashuram a false warrior and a pretender of invincibility who had claimed that he had vanquished all the kings of this world multiple times by the use of the strength of his mighty arms, for the fact was that they had surrendered willingly before him with the least opposition, and Parashuram had then killed them without compunction. Surely this was not something to boast of, and in his madness, the haughty sage had forgotten the underlying ridicule and scorn he was inviting for himself in the eyes of those who saw things critically and analytically. Further, it was a horrendous sin to kill innocent people just because they belonged to a particular race, specially those who had surrendered before him in deference to his stature of being a sage and a Brahmin. This is why he had been continuously doing penances to neutralise his sins, and was not over it yet.

The primary objective of Lord Vishnu's incarnation as sage Parashuram was to punish arrogant and haughty kings who had misused their position in the society to become reckless and torment other sections. But not everyone was evil and unrighteous, and after his initial rampage against the earlier generation of such rulers, the sage had indeed calmed down and hadn't disturbed those kings who were followers of Dharma. Instances are that of king Dashrath, the father of Lord Ram, and king Janak, the father of Sita. Sage Parashuram had not troubled them. But a person's history sticks to him, and it is usually very difficult to erase one's reputation that is often based on one's past deeds.

This is why, as we shall read in the next verse no. 78, the sage relented from repeating his sins again by killing another young prince who has married only recently, and had not committed such a grave sin as to invite the punishment of death. Therefore, the sage asked Lord Ram to surrender before him politely with folded hands, ask for forgiveness and seek immunity from punishment for the little mischief of breaking Lord Shiva's bow.

However, in Lord Ram, the arrogant and haughty sage finally found his nemesis. He had a hunch about it, and that is why he tried to find a way out of the

logjam and avoid a confrontation with Lord Ram that would finally expose his hollow claims of invincibility, strength and power.

The story of sage Parashuram subduing innocent kings and princes is a lesson that if one bows to a bully or makes a compromise, the bully would go on bullying him further. But if a person stands straight to call a bully for what he is, then the bully would withdraw.]

Verse no. 78:

**कातरोऽसि यदि वोद्गतार्चिषा तर्जितः परशुधारया मम।
ज्यानिघातकठिनाङ्गुलिर्वृथा बध्यतामभययाचनाञ्जलिः॥ ११-७८**

kātaro'si yadi vodgatārciṣā tarjitaḥ paraśudhārayā mama |
jyānighātaḥkathināṅgulirvṛthā badhyatāmabhayayācanāñjaliḥ || 11-78

11-78. In case you have become frightened or feel scared of me by seeing the sharp edge of my battle-axe, they it would be better for you that you fold your arms and join the palms of your hands, the fingers of which have developed hardened knots caused by pulling the string of the bow, to ask for forgiveness for your mischief and seek immunity from punishment for breaking the bow (of Lord Shiva). And I shall let you off with a warning."

Verse no. 79:

**एवमुक्तवति भीमदर्शने भार्गवे स्मितविकम्पिताधरः।
तद्धनुर्ग्रहणमेव राघवः प्रत्यपद्यत समर्थमुत्तरम्॥ ११-७९**

evamuktavati bhīmadarśane bhārgave smitavikampitādharah |
taddhanurgrahaṇameva rāghavaḥ pratyapadyata samarthamuttaram || 11-79

11-79. No sooner had the fierce sage challenged Lord Ram to take his bow, string and pull it if he could, than the Lord smiled politely and took that bow in his own hands very easily, as if that was the only way to give a befitting reply to the wrathful sage and calm him down. Taking Parashuram's bow swiftly in his own hands, decided Lord Ram, was an answer to the sage's arrogance, and the only means to pull his ego down to ground without uttering a single word.

Verse no. 80:

**पूर्वजन्मधनुषा समागतः सोऽतिमात्रलघुदर्शनोऽभवत्।
केवलोऽपि सुभगो नवाम्बुदः किम् पुनस्त्रिदशचापलाञ्छितः॥ ११-८०**

pūrvajanmadhanuṣā samāgataḥ so'timātralaghudarśano'bhavat |
kevalo'pi subhago navāmbudaḥ kim punastridaśacāpalāñchitaḥ || 11-80

11-80. As soon as Lord Ram took that bow, which actually belonged to Lord Vishnu, Lord Ram's previous form, before it came in sage Parashuram's possession¹, Lord

Ram appeared all the more extraordinary and exceptionally charming, just like the case of a fresh rain bearing cloud looking all the more beautiful when a rain-bow appears on it.

[Note--¹The bow of Lord Vishnu is called 'Sharang Bow'. Since sage Parashuram himself is regarded as the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, this bow came to him in a natural progression. But Lord Ram, who was a personified form of Lord Vishnu himself, needed it himself to carry out the mandate of eliminating the demons. So every thing that unfolded was part of a larger scheme of things so that the bow of Lord Vishnu that was hitherto in the safe custody of sage Parashuram can finally come in the hands of Lord Ram. And once the bow went to its rightful owner, i.e. Lord Ram, sage Parashuram immediately realised who the Lord actually was--an image of himself, as both sage Parashuram and Lord Ram were Lord Vishnu in different roles.

In Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284 we read that when sage Parashuram gave the bow to Lord Ram, it swiftly left the sage's hand and went to Lord Ram's hand, implying that the bow felt very glad to return to its rightful owner.

Verse no. 81:

तेन भूमिनिहितैककोटि तत्कार्मुकम् च बलिनाधिरोपितम्।
निष्प्रभश्च रिपुरास भूभृताम् धूमशेष इव धूमकेतनः॥ ११-८१

tena bhūminihitakakoṭi tatkārmukam ca balinādhiropitam |
niṣṭrabhaśca ripurāsa bhūbhṛtām dhūmaśeṣa iva dhūmaketanah || 11-81

11-81. No sooner did Lord Ram put one end of that bow on the ground as a support for bending it so that he could sling the string from the other end, than the fiery countenance of sage Parashuram, the enemy of kings, suddenly faded, and his radiance was reduced to a dull colour of smoke emanating from the embers of a fire that has been extinguished.

Verse no. 82:

तावुभावपि परस्परस्थितौ वर्धमानपरिहीनतेजसौ।
पश्यति स्म जनता दिनात्यये पार्वणौ शशिदिवाकराविव॥ ११-८२

tāvubhāvapi parasparasthitau vardhamānaparihīnatejasau |
paśyati sma janatā dinātyaye pārvaṇau śaśidivākarāviva || 11-82

11-82. The people who were present on the occasion saw Lord Ram and Parashuram standing face-to-face before each other, with the former having his glory enhanced while the other had his glory proportionately reduced. It reminded the beholder of the evening of the full moon night when the light of the sun goes on gradually decreasing while that of the full moon increases till a point of time when the sunlight completely vanishes and is replaced with the cool and soothing light of the full moon.

[Note--In this analogy, Lord Ram is compared to the full moon, while sage Parashuram is likened to the sun. The sun's light, though many times more powerful than that of the moon, is however hot and unwelcome, especially during the hot months of summer, while, on the other hand, the light of the full moon is very welcome as it is soothing, cool and rejuvenating. As the sun sets in the evening, its splendour and radiance sets too, making way for the ascendance of the moon whose light illuminates the sky, and after the suffering of the hot day everyone looks forward for such a night of full moon that would give peace and comfort. It seems that when the time comes for the full moon to rise and illuminate the world with its soothing and pleasant light, the sun voluntarily retires and withdraws its light as it feels ashamed of the harshness of its rays.

Therefore, in a metaphoric way, when the right time came and Lord Ram and sage Parashuram stood facing each other, the glory and radiance of the latter faded away before the former, and the sage felt as all his fire and energy, triggered by his anger and haughtiness, had suddenly been defused, as if a blazing fire is doused by a soothing spray of cold water symbolising the virtues of calmness, politeness and humility that Lord Ram exhibited. The sage realised that though he had been so proud of his achievements till now, his glory was based more on fear of punishment rather than on his polite, noble and amiable manners that the world would have appreciated more, and since these qualities were abundant in Lord Ram in sharp contrast to himself, it was clear to the sage that in changed times and circumstances, Lord Ram is indeed more qualified to have glory and fame than he is.

Hence, the sage wisely withdrew just like the case of the sun quietly withdrawing from the scene when it is the time for the full moon to rise.]

Verse no. 83:

तम् कृपामृदुरवेक्ष्य भार्गवम् राघवः स्खलितवीर्यमात्मनि।

स्वम् च संहितममोघमाशुगम् व्याजहार हरसूनुसंनिभः॥ ११-८३

tam kṛpāmṛduravekṣya bhārgavam rāghavaḥ skhalitavīryamātmani |
svam ca saṁhitamamoghamāśugam vyājahāra harasūnusaṁnibhaḥ || 11-83

11-83. Lord Ram, who was like Kartikeya¹, the son of Lord Shiva, was very valiant, strong and powerful, yet kind-hearted. So the Lord became mellowed when he saw sage Parashuram standing before him like a defeated warrior. The Lord looked at the sage and then at the arrow which the Lord had already mounted on his bow.

[Note--¹Kartikeya is regarded as the patron deity of war, and a symbol of courage and victory. Here Lord Ram is likened to Kartikeya primarily to imply that the Lord embodies the virtues of valour, courage and strength as well as invincibility as he is always victorious. Sage Parashuram, though till now considered invincible, has been subdued by Lord Ram, and seems like a defeated warrior asking for mercy for the first time in his life.

Lord Ram did not wish to unnecessarily hurt a Brahmin sage, as it would be an unpardonable sin, especially when sage Parashuram stood humbled and defeated.]

Verse no. 84:

न प्रहर्तुमलमस्मि निर्दयम् विप्र इत्यभिभत्यपि त्वयि।
शंस किम् गतिमनेन पत्रिणा हन्मि लोकमुत ते मखार्जितम्॥ ११-८४

na prahartumalamasmi nirdayam vipra ityabhibhatyapi tvayi |
śaṁsa kim gatimanena patriṇā hanmi lokamuta te makhārjitam || 11-84

11-84. Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram "Look sage, I have already mounted an arrow on the bow. Though you have insulted me and challenged my strength, still I shall not hurt you mindlessly because you are a Brahmin. But since my arrow cannot go in vain, tell me what shall I do with it. Should I use it to stop you from going to any place to do more mischief (like killing some of the kings and threatening others), or should I use it to neutralise all the merits you have accumulated by your doing fire sacrifices and other spiritual practices that empower you to attain higher worlds (i.e. have access to heaven)."

Verse no. 85:

प्रत्युवाच तमृषिर्न तत्त्वतः त्वाम् न वेद्मि पुरुषम् पुरातनम्।
गाम् गतस्य तव धाम वैष्णवम् कोपितो ह्यसि मया दिदृक्षुणा॥ ११-८५

pratyuvāca tamṛṣirna tattvataḥ tvām na vedmi puruṣam purātanam |
gām gatasya tava dhāma vaiṣṇavam kopito hyasi mayā didṛkṣuṇā || 11-85

11-85. Sage Parashuram replied: "Oh Lord! It is not that when I saw you I did not recognise that you are a manifestation of the Supreme Being praised and honoured by the scriptures, but I wanted to make sure if my hunch was indeed correct. That is why I acted the way I did to enrage you and see if you are terrified of me, and then to make myself doubly sure I had given Lord Vishnu's bow to you.

{I thought that if you were an ordinary human prince, you would become scared when you see me in an angry form like all other princes do when they learn of my reputation. But of course, where do I stand in front of the Supreme Being? I am definitely no match for him. Your fearlessness made me quite certain that my hunch was right, yet I wanted to check it further, so I gave you the bow that actually belonged to Lord Vishnu. Since you easily took it and stringed it, and have now mounted an arrow on it, which is not an ordinary feat because only Lord Vishnu can do it, all my doubts have vanished concerning you.}

Verse no. 86:

भस्मसात्कृतवतः पितृद्विषः पात्रसाच्च वसुधाम् ससागराम्।
आहितो जयविपर्ययोऽपि मे श्लाघ्य एव परमेष्ठिना त्वया॥ ११-८६

bhasmasātkṛtavataḥ pitṛdviṣaḥ pātrasācca vasudhām sasāgarām |
āhito jayaviparyayo'pi me ślāghya eva parameṣṭhinā tvayā || 11-86

11-86. It is indeed a matter of highest honour and a great privilege for me to have personally met and interacted with the Supreme Being. Besides this, I feel so glad that

when the time came for me to surrender my ego and become a humble sage, I did so in front of the Supreme Being. I am not an ordinary sage and Brahmin, for I have repeatedly reduced to ashes members of the race who had been my father's enemies (i.e. the Kshatriya kings), and having vanquished them I had donated the land extending from one ocean to another to Brahmins¹.

[Note--¹Sage Parashuram had subtly warned Lord Ram that he should not become proud of himself for having subdued the sage, and be careful while threatening the sage with a mounted arrow because he (Parashuram) has voluntarily decided to surrender before Lord Ram as he has acknowledged that the Lord was a personified form of the Supreme Being, and not because he is scared of the young prince, for the simple reason that he had the necessary power to overcome Lord Ram should he decide to do so. And to bolster his argument, the sage cited how he had repeatedly vanquished kings and then donated their land parcels to Brahmins. This also means that the sage did not vanquish kings to usurp their lands with a selfish intent, as he had donated all conquered lands as charities to Brahmins.]

Verse no. 87:

तत् गतिम् मतिमताम् वरेप्सिताम् पुण्यतीर्थगमनाय रक्ष मे।
पीडयिष्यति न माम् खिलीकृता स्वर्गपद्धतिः अभोघलोलुपम्॥ ११-८७

tat gatim matimatām varepsitām puṇyatīrthagamanāya rakṣa me |
pīḍayiṣyati na mām khilikṛtā svargapaddhatiḥ abhoghalolupam || 11-87

11-87. Oh intelligent and wise Lord Ram! Please don't create any hindrance in my path which would prevent me from going on pilgrimages to holy places. Since I have no desire of enjoying pleasures of the senses, hence if I do not go to heaven it won't effect me and I won't feel sad.

Therefore, out of the two options you can opt for the latter by blocking my way to heaven, but please do not stop me from being able to go on pilgrimages."

Verse no. 88:

प्रत्यपद्यत तथेति राघवः प्राङ्मुखश्च विसर्ज सायकम्।
भार्गवस्य सुकृतोऽपि सोऽभवत् स्वर्गमार्गपरिघो दुरत्ययः॥ ११-८८

pratyapadyata tatheti rāghavaḥ prāṇmukhaśca visasarja sāyakam |
bhārgavasya sukrto'pi so'bhavat svargamārgaparigho duratyayaḥ || 11-88

11-88. Lord Ram graciously accepted sage Parashuram's submission, and turning towards the east the Lord shot that arrow. As a result, though sage Parashuram had done great penances and practiced austerities, yet Lord Ram's arrow blocked the sage's path to heaven by becoming a barrier for him for all times to come.

[Note--The sun rises in the east, and the sun's brilliance stands for the splendour of heaven. After the gloom of the night, it appears that the sun emerges from the gates of heaven to light up the world with its light. The sun gradually climbs up in the sky,

symbolising a person's journey to heaven when he rises up from this mortal world dominated by ignorance and darkness, and progresses gradually to become enlightened and self-realised which is tantamount to reaching higher states of existence represented by the heaven.]

Verse no. 89:

राघवोऽपि चरणौ तपोनिधेः क्षम्यतामिति वदन्समस्पृशत्।
निर्जितेषु तरसा तरस्विनाम् शत्रुषु प्रणतिरेव कीर्तये॥ ११-८९

rāghavo'pi caraṇau taponidheḥ kṣamyatāmiti vadansamasprśat |
nirjiteṣu tarasā tarasvinām śatruṣu praṇatireva kīrtaye || 11-89

11-89. After that, Lord Ram touched the feet of the great Brahmin sage Parashuram, and asked for forgiveness for all the unpleasant exchanges that had passed between them in show of strength with each other. When a great warrior attains victory over his adversary by relying on his personal strength, valour and powers, and then shows the greatness of his heart and the noble side of his character by excusing and forgiving the adversary by showing humility and kindness to him, then the valiant victor's glory certainly increases and his fame is enhanced.

[Note--When a victor forgives one whom he has subdued, instead of venting his wrath on the latter by punishing him, then the world lauds the victor's noble character and praises him for his goodness. In this case, Lord Ram not only forgives sage Parashuram for his initial outburst of impertinence, but also bows down before the sage to touch his feet and ask the sage to forgive him for speaking rudely with a Brahmin sage of Parashuram's exalted stature, the sage felt overwhelmed and became emotional because he himself has acknowledged that Lord Ram was a personified form of the Supreme Being. And if the Supreme Being himself asks for pardon and bows down to touch a sage's feet to show how much respect he has for sages and Brahmins, then surely Parashuram felt extremely thrilled and joyful.]

Verse no. 90:

राजसत्वमवधूय मातृकम् पित्र्यमस्मि गमितः शमम् यदा।
नन्वनिन्दितफलो मम त्वया निग्रहोऽप्ययमनुगृहीकृतः॥ ११-९०

rājasatvamavadhūya mātṛkam pitryamasmi gamitaḥ śamam yadā |
nanvaninditaphalo mama tvayā nigraho'pyayamanugṛhīkṛtaḥ || 11-90

11-90. The grateful sage Parashuram told Lord Ram: "Oh Lord! By granting me this permission by way of a reward (of having unrestricted access to holy places where I can go unhindered for pilgrimage), you have graciously done a great favour to me. It is because now you have terminated the somewhat bad and negative qualities of Raja Guna that I had inherited from my Kshatriya mother (i.e. Renuka), and replaced them with good and positive qualities of Sata Guna that befits a son of a Brahmin father (i.e. Jamdagni).

[Note--The Kshatriya race is known for its warrior qualities, which implies that they are fighters who have no regret in killing others. They would become angry and vengeful at the slightest provocation, and do not believe in forgiving their adversaries. They would use all tricks of polity, such as Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda to subdue their opponents even if that meant using unfair means. The Kshatriya race is prone to becoming haughty, arrogant and egoist by virtue of their successful exploits. They are selfish, and have no compunction in destroying others if such acts bring wealth, prosperity, fame and glory to them. This is called Raja Guna.

The Brahmin class, on the contrary, is usually calm, learned and wise. They have good qualities in abundance, and follow Dharma diligently. They would abhor bloodshed and harming others just for fulfilling their vested interests.

So here, sage Parashuram thanks Lord Ram for neutralising his haughtiness and terminating his warrior-class characteristics for all times to come, thereby making him a true Brahmin saint. This is particularly true as the Lord allowed the sage to go on doing his religious practices, such as going on pilgrimages and continuing with his penances and austerities. The sage was aware that with this freedom, he would regain his lost exalted stature as a great Brahmin sage which he had lost by his indulging in relentless blood shedding by killing Kshatriya kings and princes. The sage at last realised that what he had been doing for so long was against the characters and values of a Brahmin sage, so now he must make amends for his past sins. He thanked Lord Ram for making him aware of his follies, and bringing him to the ground.]

Verse no. 91:

साधयाम्यहमविघ्नमस्तु ते देवकार्यमुपपादयिष्यतः।

ऊचिवानिति वचः सलक्ष्मणम् लक्ष्मणाग्रजमृषितिरोदधे॥ ११-९१

sādhayāmyahamavighnamastu te devakāryamupapādayiṣyataḥ |
ūcivāniti vacaḥ salakṣmaṇam lakṣmaṇāgrajamṛṣitirodadhe || 11-91

11.91. Now I take your permission to leave. May you be blessed with unhindered success in completing the task of the gods (which is to eliminate the demons) for which you have descended on this earth."

Saying thus, sage Parashuram disappeared from view (i.e. he quietly went away)¹ after paying his respects to Lord Ram and Laxman.

[Note--¹When sage Parashuram had arrived, he came like a howling storm, but when he went away he did so quietly as if the storm had dissipated all its energy, and the velocity of the wind subsides to become a soft and pleasant breeze.]

Verse no. 92:

तस्मिन्गते विजयिनम् परिरभ्य रामम् स्नेहादमन्यत पिता पुनरेव जातम्।

तस्याभवत्क्षणशुचः परितोषलाभः कक्षाग्निलङ्घिततरोरिव वृष्टिपातः॥ ११-९२

tasmingate vijayinam parirabhya rāmam snehādamanyata pitā punareva
jātam |

tasyābhavatksaṇaśucaḥ paritoṣalābhah kakṣāgnilaṅghitataroriva vṛṣṭipātaḥ ||
11-92

11-92. When the angry sage Parashuram had gone away, king Dashrath was overwhelmed with joy. He affectionately embraced Lord Ram as if his son had got a new life. This sudden arrival of danger and its as sudden a disappearance made Dashrath so happy and overjoyed as if the trees of a forest that face extinction due to a raging wildfire suddenly find reprieve because of rainfall (which douses the fire and saves the trees from annihilation).

Verse no. 93:

अथ पथि गमयित्वा क्लृप्तरम्योपकार्ये कतिचिदवनिपालः शर्वरीः शर्वकल्पः।
पुरमविशदयोध्याम् मैथिलीदर्शनीनाम् कुवलयितगवाक्षाम् लोचनैरङ्गनानाम्॥ ११-९३

atha pathi gamayitvā kl̥ptaramyopakārye katicidavanipālāḥ śarvarīḥ
śarvakalpaḥ |
puramaviśadayodhyām maithilīdarśanīnām kuvalayitagavākṣām
locanairāṅganānām || 11-93

8-93. Then, king Dashrath resumed his journey to his capital city (of Ayodhya). He spent a few nights on the way and camped in elaborately provided and comfortable tents that had been erected for his convenience.

Finally he arrived in Ayodhya where the eyes of charming ladies who had crowded on balconies and peeped through windows to have a glimpse of Sita, their future queen, resembled so many lotus flowers welcoming Sita on her maiden visit to the city.

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये एकादशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye ekādaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 11th chapter in Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Chapter (Sarga) 12, verse nos. 1-104:

Introduction

King Dashrath returned to Ayodhya with the marriage party of his four sons and their brides. The king ruled for many years. By-and-by he became old and decided to appoint his eldest son Lord Ram as the next ruler of the kingdom. This news spread like wildfire and made all the citizens extremely happy as they loved Lord Ram. But fate had something different in store, for Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat and a favourite queen of the king, became jealous as she wanted her son to ascend the throne. So she threw tantrums and forced the king to send Lord Ram to a forest exile

for fourteen years so that the decks are cleared for Bharat's anointment as the heir-apparent.

Though on the face of it this development was most unwarranted and ignominious as it had cast an indelible dark scar on the royal family's untainted reputation, but it fit in well from the perspective of the good of the world and help Lord Ram to fulfil the divine mandate with which Lord Vishnu had come down to earth in the Lord's form, which was to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons. It would not have been possible without Lord Ram going to the forest to get rid of them one by one.

It so happened that during the ancient battle between the gods and the demons, king Dashrath had fought on the side of the gods, and during this battle Kaikeyi had played a key role to save the life of the king. Pleased, the king had promised her two boons, which she could redeem anytime. Kaikeyi had kept them pending, and now she compelled the king to fulfil his two promises. Kaikeyi asked that her first wish was that her son Bharat be appointed next king, and that her second wish was that Lord Ram be sent to the forest for fourteen years.

The king was stunned and left speechless. But he was a righteous and truthful man who would keep his words no matter what the consequences were. So therefore, Lord Ram was made to go to the forest. The Lord's wife Sita and his brother Laxman decided to accompany him. The three proceeded to the forest. Lord Ram had no ill-will against anyone, for the Lord had excellent virtues of equanimity, forgiveness and tolerance; he treated all circumstances alike, and therefore for him going to the forest was as good as staying in the capital. Besides that, privately he knew that it was time for him to fulfil the divine mandate for which he had come down to earth--i.e. the elimination of the demons.

Meanwhile, the grieving king died. At that time, Bharat was in his maternal uncle's place, so the ministers of the kingdom sent an urgent message for him to come back immediately. When Bharat learnt about the death of his father and the cause of it, which was Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman going to the forest due to the jealousy of his mother Kaikeyi, he became furious. He not only rebuked his mother sternly, using harsh words for her, but developed hatred for her for all times to come. He was of a noble temperament, and a most upright and righteous person. The thought that his dear brother, Lord Ram, had been sent to the forest due to his mother's selfishness and greed for power, he developed repugnance for the wealth of the kingdom, deciding that he would have nothing to do with it. If Lord Ram could live in the forest, then he too can live like an ascetic.

Bharat decided that he would immediately go to the forest and beg Lord Ram for forgiveness, tell the Lord that he is not a party to his mother's evil design, and request the Lord to return home and ascend the throne without a second thought.

So therefore, Bharat prepared a large procession and headed to Chitrakoot where Lord Ram lived at that time. Bharat took along all paraphernalia for anointment of the Lord in the forest itself. Lord Ram affectionately embraced Bharat and assured the latter that he need not worry as the Lord loved him more than anyone else, and that the Lord knows that Bharat is not guilty of any mischief. But since their father is no more now, it would not be proper for the Lord to disobey his father's commands whereby he was

to stay in the forest for fourteen years. Lord Ram, however, promised Bharat that as soon as this period is over, he will come back to accept the crown of the kingdom. Bharat asked for some token to represent the Lord during his absence, so Lord Ram gave him his wooden sandals. Bharat returned to Ayodhya with a heavy heart, and placed Lord Ram's sandals on the throne while he himself retired to a suburb of Ayodhya, at a place known as Nandigram, and started living as an ascetic. His younger brother Shatrughan looked after the affairs of the kingdom in consultation with him.

One day, Indra's son Jayant assumed the form of a crow and scratched Sita's breasts with his claws to tease Lord Ram. When the Lord saw blood oozing out from the wound, he shot a twig at Jayant to symbolise his arrow in order to punish him, and the result was that one eye of Jayant was taken out.

Lord Ram left Chitrakoot and proceeded ahead in the forest. He arrived at sage Atri's hermitage where the sage's wife Anusuiya advised Sita on the duties of a wife, and the principles of service and loyalty that she must practice with respect to her husband.

From there, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman proceeded to Panchvati in the deep forest and began living there. One day, a demoness named Supernakha, a sister of the demon king Ravana, came to the Lord's hermitage and proposed that he establish a marital relationship with her. It was a ridiculous proposition, so Lord Ram asked Laxman to chop-off her ears and nose to deform her as punishment as well as to let the world know what kind of woman she was. She rushed for help to the demons Khar, Dushan, Trishira etc. and asked them to take revenge. They attacked Lord Ram and Laxman with a huge demon army. In the battle that ensued, every demon warrior was slayed by Lord Ram.

Astonished and peeved at this development, because she had never expected that mighty demons would be so easily done away with, the stunned Supernakha rushed to Lanka to inform Ravana. Flabbergasted and perturbed, the demon king decided to do something as it was a direct challenge to his authority.

Ravana forced Marich to assume the form of a golden deer so that he could use some trick to abduct Sita to settle scores with Lord Ram. So, Ravana took Sita forcibly and held her captive in Lanka. On the way, however, he was intercepted by Jatayu, an old but powerful vulture. Jatayu tried to free Sita from Ravana's clutches, but the demon king cut-off his wings and Jatayu fell down on the ground gravely wounded.

When Lord Ram and Laxman set out to search for Sita, they met Jatayu who informed them about Ravana taking her away and proceeding in the southern direction where the island of Lanka was located. Lord Ram performed the last rites of Jatayu, and proceeded in the south direction as advised by him.

The two brothers reached the kingdom of monkeys and bears, known as Kishkindha. There, they met Hanuman who was instrumental in forging a bond of friendship between Lord Ram and the kingdom's prince Sugriva. When Lord Ram learnt how Baali, Sugriva's elder brother, had usurped the crown by chasing his younger brother out to live in exile, the Lord helped his friend Sugriva get back his right to the throne of Kishkindha by slaying Baali. Sugriva expressed his gratitude to the Lord and

promised that he will not only help the Lord find the whereabouts of Sita but employ all the resources at his command to restore her to him.

Many groups of monkeys and bears were sent in all the directions to search for Sita. One such group consisting of Hanuman, Angad, Jamvant, Nala, Neel etc. went in the southern direction till they arrived on the shore of the southern ocean. The vast expanse of the ocean blocked their way. Then Hanuman made a giant leap across the ocean to reach Lanka. He brought back Sita's news. Then Lord Ram along with a mighty army of Kishkindha launched a campaign to free Sita, and they crossed the ocean by constructing a bridge across it. A no-holds barred fierce war broke out between the army of Lord Ram and the demon army of Ravana.

When Indra, the king of gods, observed that Lord Ram was on foot while Ravana rode a chariot, he sent his own chariot driven by Matali, Indra's charioteer. In the final stages of the war, a blood-cuddling fierce battle took place between Lord Ram and Ravana. In the end, Ravana fell to arrows of Lord Ram. Immediately, as soon as Ravana died, Lord Ram ended the war by removing the string from his bow. Matali was told to go back to Indra in the heaven.

After that, Lord Ram crowned Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, as the king of Lanka. Sita was purified through the fire test. Finally, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, along with many chief commanders of the monkey and bear army such as Hanuman, Sugriv, Angad, Jamvant etc. as well as Vibhishan, the new king of Lanka, headed home to Ayodhya aboard the Pushpak plane that was available in Lanka.

This part of the story spans Ayodhya Kand, Aranya Kand, Kishkindha Kand, Sundar Kand, and Lanka Kand of all major versions of the story of the Ramayana, such as Ram Charit Manas written by Goswami Tulsidas, Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, and the famous Valmiki's Ramayana.

That said, now let us proceed with our reading of this Chapter no. 12 from Raghuvansham of Kalidas.

Verse no. 1:

निर्विष्टविषयस्नेहः स दशान्तमुपेयिवान्।

आसीदासन्ननिर्वाणः प्रदीपार्चिरिवोषसि॥ १२-१

nirviṣṭaviṣayasnehaḥ sa daśāntamupeyivān|
āsīdāsannanirvāṇaḥ pradīpārcirivoṣasi || 12-1

12-1. King Dashrath had enjoyed a successful and fruitful life, with all the pleasures of the sense organs at his disposal. But as time passed, old age crept in and made him realise that the time for his death was not far away. His condition was like that of a lamp that has shown bright for a very long time every morning, but gradually its oil was exhausted and its wick nearly consumed, indicating that the lamp was about to extinguish.

[Note--King Dashrath is compared to a lamp in the morning, instead of one in the evening, as normally it should have been, because this verse is talking about his twilight days when his end was near. Why is it so?

There are many ways to interpret this verse. One: it is to indicate that just like each morning opens the door for a bright day when a man does so many constructive and noble things, Dashrath's virtuous life had been full of good activities and noble deeds. He had not wasted a single day in laziness, and had never allowed the darkness of negativity come in his way. The lamp of the evening would imply coming of the darkness of the night, while the lamp of the morning implies the coming of a bright new day ahead.

Two: king Dashrath belonged to the 'solar race', a race directly descending from the sun-god. Hence, this symbolism of the 'lamp of the morning' is very apt.

Three: a lamp is lighted in the evening hours, burns through the night, and by morning its oil is consumed and wick exhausted, resulting in the lamp getting extinguished in the morning hours. Metaphorically, king Dashrath took birth at a time when the glory of the Ikshwaku race was on the decline, as represented by the declining light of the day, and by his deeds and actions the king established himself and his glory in the world just as the lighted lamp makes its presence felt in the darkness of the night. King Dashrath's Sata Gunas, i.e. good qualities representing his virtues, character and righteous way of life illuminated the world and removed the darkness symbolising the Tama Guna that dominated it.

Four: the king was to be rewarded for his excellence and fellowship of Dharma in the form of having four glorious sons, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, who would be the four wheels of the radiant chariot symbolising the virtues of Dharma. The light of four lamps (represented by the four brothers) is surely and definitely brighter than one single lamp (represented by king Dashrath), and when one of these lamps is like the sun itself (here representing Lord Ram), there is no limit to the intensity of illumination that they would spread all around. To make way for these four lamps, the single lamp had to be removed, metaphorically implying that king Dashrath had to step aside and make space so that the glory of Lord Ram and his three brothers can shine brilliantly in this world. With the ascendance of four noble brothers, led by Lord Ram, the glory and fame of the Ikshwaku race spread far and wide, reaching its pinnacle symbolised by the bright light of the day that follows the night-lamp's extinguishing as soon as the day breaks and the sun rises.]

Verse no. 2:

तम् कर्णमूलमागत्य रामे श्रीर्न्यस्यतामिति।

कैकेयीशङ्कयेवाह पलितच्छद्मना जरा॥ १२-२

tam karṇamūlamāgatya rāme śrīrnyasyatāmiti|
kaikeyīśaṅkayevāha palitacchadmanā jarā || 12-2

12-2. The hairs around the king's ears had turned grey, as if old age, worried about Kaikeyi's evil nature, had disguised itself in this way to whisper a warning to the king that he must not waste time any more, and crown Lord Ram as the next king before it is too late.

[Note--This idea is expressly stated, almost in the same way, in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 2.

Fate and Providence knew that Kaikeyi is sure to create some kind of nuisance and prevent Lord Ram from ascending the throne of the kingdom. The king remained oblivious of this danger as he loved Kaikeyi and trusted her. He could never imagine that his favourite wife Kaikeyi would one day betray his trust in her, and become an instrument of his death. The grey hair was a warning signal to him that he should no longer keep postponing the appointment of his heir to the throne in the belief and confidence that it was natural that his eldest son, Lord Ram, would automatically ascend the throne in case something happens to him. If he did not complete the process personally while the things are favourably going his way, then Kaikeyi is sure to throw a spanner in the wheel and stop Lord Ram from being crowned as the next king of Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 3:

सा पौरान्पौरकान्तस्य रामस्याभ्युदयश्रुतिः।

प्रत्येकम् हृदयांचक्रे कुल्येवोद्यानपादपान्॥ १२-३

sā paurānpaurakāntasya rāmasyābhyudayaśrutiḥ|
pratyekam hrādayāñcakre kulyevodyānapādapān || 12-3

12-3. Just like the case of the trees of a garden feeling refreshed when water reaches them through water-channels meant for watering plants of the garden, so likewise when the news of Lord Ram's elevation to the throne of the kingdom to become the next king reached the citizens of Ayodhya, they were extremely delighted in their hearts and welcomed the news with cheer.

Verse no.4:

तस्याभिषेकसंभारम् कल्पितम् क्रूरनिश्चया।

दूषयामास कैकेयी शोकोष्णैः पार्थिवाश्रुभिः॥ १२-४

tasyābhiṣekasambhāram kalpitam krūraniścayā|
dūṣayāmāsa kaikeyī śokoṣṇaiḥ pāthivāśrubhiḥ || 12-4

12-4. Kaikeyi, who was merciless and wicked to the core of her heart, threw such a tantrum and spun such a crooked yarn of mischief that king Dashrath was plunged in grief and shed so much tears that symbolically polluted all the auspicious paraphernalia that had been arranged for the crowning ceremony of Lord Ram¹.

{What was supposed to be an occasion for celebration, suddenly turned into a moment of grief and lamentation. All the auspicious things arranged for the elaborate ceremony to be held for Lord Ram's coronation, suddenly lay like a burden and turned into an eye-sore due to Kaikeyi's ill intent. What did Kaikeyi want? The answer is given in verse no. 6 herein below.}

[Note--¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

Verse no. 5:

सा किलाश्वासिता चण्डी भर्त्रा तत् संश्रुतौ वरौ।
उद्ववामेन्द्रसिक्ता भूर्बिलमग्नाविवोरगौ॥ १२-५

sā kilāśvāsītā caṇḍī bhartrā tat saṁśrutau varau|
udvavāmendrasiktā bhūrbilamagnāvivoragau || 12-5

12-5. Kaikeyi, who was very furious, asked king Dashrath to immediately redeem two promises he had made to her in the past¹. The harsh and merciless words claiming redemption of these two pending promises came out of Kaikeyi's mouth as if two poisonous serpents come out of their holes after torrential rain soaks the earth.

[Note--¹The story of king Dashrath promising Kaikeyi two boons is briefly as follows: It so happened that during the ancient battle between the gods and the demons, king Dashrath had fought on the side of the gods, and during this battle Kaikeyi had played a key role to save the life of the king. Pleased, the king had promised her two boons, which she could redeem anytime. Kaikeyi had kept them pending, and now she compelled the king to fulfil his two promises. Kaikeyi asked that her first wish was that her son Bharat be appointed next king, and that her second wish was that Lord Ram be sent to the forest for fourteen years.

²After heavy rainfall, all subterranean crevices and fissures are filled with rain-water, forcing reptiles such as snakes to emerge from their holes. In this analogy, Kaikeyi's harsh and merciless words demanding fulfilment of her two pending boons are likened to two poisonous snakes emerging from their holes after rainfall.]

Verse no. 6:

तयोश्चतुर्दशैकेन रामम् प्राव्राजयत्समाः।
द्वितीयेन सुतस्यैच्छद्वैधव्यैकफलाम् श्रियम्॥ १२-६

tayoścaturdaśaikena rāmam prāvrājayatsamāḥ|
dvitīyena sutasyaicchadvaidhavyaikaphalām śriyam || 12-6

12-6. Out of the two boons Kaikeyi wished to be redeemed, one was that Lord Ram should go to the forest for fourteen years, and the other was that her son Bharat should get the crown and be appointed as the king. But all her intentions turned futile and brought nothing but infamy and misfortune to her, as she soon became a widow (because king Dashrath died from the shock and grief of sending Lord Ram to the forest)², and she never got her wish fulfilled by having her son crowned as a king so that she would enjoy all the privileges of being the mother of the king (as Bharat refused to accept the crown)³.

[Note--Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 36.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 155; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 180.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 177-Doha no. 178; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 181-to Doha no. 183.]

Verse no. 7:

पित्रा दत्तम् रुदन्नामः प्राङ्महीम् प्रत्यपद्यत।

पश्चाद्वनाय गच्छेति तदाज्ञाम् मुदितोऽग्रहीत्॥ १२-७

pitṛā dattam rudanrāmaḥ prāṇmahīm pratyapadyata|
paścādvanaḥ gaccheti tadājñām mudito'grahīt || 12-7

12-7. When Lord Ram was asked to accept the crown, he had been very reluctant and felt sad at this offer¹, but when he was asked to go the forest, the Lord felt very glad and cheerfully accepted it².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42; (ii) Doha no. 165 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Why was Lord Ram feeling sorry when he learnt that he was to get the crown of the kingdom as per his father's wish, and why was he so happy when asked to go to the forest instead? The answer is obvious: Lord Ram was a human manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and he had come to earth with a special mandate to eliminate the demons led by Ravana. It would not have been possible if he had become a king, for then the demon king Ravana would go to hide somewhere if the Lord went with a mighty army to defeat him.

Another reason is that Ravana had a boon from the creator Brahma according to which he was to die at the hands of a human being and monkeys. The Lord had to take an army of 'monkeys', and not of 'humans', with him to eliminate Ravana, and an army of monkeys was only to be found in deep forests of the south. Hence, it was imperative for Lord Ram to go all the way to the kingdom of monkeys and bears in Kishkindha so that conditions of Brahma's boons could be met.]

Verse no. 8:

दधतो मङ्गलक्षौमे वसानस्य च वल्कले।

ददृशुर्विस्मितास्तस्य मुखरागम् समम् जनाः॥ १२-८

dadhato maṅgalakṣaume vasānasya ca valkale|
dadṛśuर्विस्मितास्तस्य mukharāgam samam janāḥ || 12-8

12-8. The people were amazed at the calm and composed expression on Lord Ram's face under both the contrasting circumstances--viz. when he wore royal silk robes as the prince of the kingdom, and when he shortly discarded them to change into hand-made coarse garments (such as from jute or clothing made from the bark of a tree) befitting a forest-dweller¹. This clearly indicated that Lord practiced exemplary virtues of equanimity and dispassion under all circumstances.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165. Lord Ram neither showed happiness when he was informed that the king has decided to make him his heir and crown him as the next monarch, nor did he show anger and frustration when the same king suddenly asked him to go to the forest for no fault of his. Lord Ram was happy either way.]

Verse no. 9:

**स सीतालक्ष्मणसखः सत्याद्गुरुमलोपयन्।
विवेश दण्डकारण्यम् प्रत्येकम् च सताम् मनः॥ १२-९**

sa sītālakṣmaṇasakhaḥ satyādgurumalopayan|
viveśa daṇḍakāraṇyam pratyekam ca satām manaḥ || 12-9

12-9. In his endeavour to obey his father, the righteous Lord Ram, accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Laxman, went away calmly obediently to enter the Dandak forest, which also enabled the Lord to enter the heart of all the citizens.

{By his willingness to obey his father's commands, Lord Ram found a place in the hearts of the subjects of his kingdom who very much appreciated the Lord's decision to uphold the virtue of obedience to one's father. If there was another prince in Lord Ram's place, and the platter of kingdom was abruptly snatched from him, he would certainly have revolted. But the Lord peacefully and obediently accepted his father's will. Every single individual liked this goodness of character of the Lord.}

Verse no. 10:

**राजापि तद्वियोगार्तः स्मृत्वा शापम् स्वकर्मजम्।
शरीरत्यागमात्रेण शुद्धिलाभमन्यत॥ १२-१०**

rājāpi tadviyogārtah smṛtvā śāpam svakarmajam|
śarīratyāgamātreṇa śuddhilābhamanyata || 12-10

12-10. King Dashrath plunged in an ocean of grief upon separation from his beloved son Lord Ram. He remembered the curse of a sage's son (named Shrawan Kumar) that the king had brought upon himself due to his own deeds¹. When he recalled that curse, he knew that the only way to wash the sin that caused the curse was to die.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 155. The context of this narration is Dashrath's death in grief of separation from his most beloved son, Lord Ram. Dashrath tell this story of Shrawan Kumar to Kaushalya by way of an explanation as to why the things had taken such an

unexpected and dramatic but nasty turn, which resulted in the present situation when he was dying in grief of separation from his dearest son, Lord Ram, without any hope of recourse to any sort of relief of any kind.

The story behind the curse that king Dashrath had incurred upon himself is this: During his younger days, Dashrath had gone hunting in the forests surrounding Ayodhya during one night, and while searching for game he went near the banks of river Saryu. It was dark. From a distance he heard a soft sound resembling the trumpet of a young elephant emanating from the direction of the river. Right at that time, a young hermit named Shrawan Kumar had gone to the river to fill a pitcher of water for his blind and thirsty parents whom he was taking on a pilgrimage. The sound which Dashrath mistook for the soft trumpet of an elephant was actually made by the gurgling of water as it filled a narrow-necked pitcher which Shrawan Kumar was filling to take to quench the thirst of his aged parents who were waiting for him to bring water for them at some safe distance away.

As is quite natural with young princes who are out hunting within their domain, Dashrath did not think twice nor did he bother to investigate the source of the sound before shooting a sharp arrow in the direction of the source of the sound. He had thought that if he killed this elephant with his shot, he would take it as a trophy back to the palace to show everyone how good an archer and a sharpshooter he was.

But unfortunately for Dashrath, the arrow struck Shrawan Kumar directly. The pious hermit did not mind his own death, but was worried that he failed to take drinking water for his thirsty parents who were totally dependent upon him as they were blind.

So, when Dashrath came to see what game he had shot down, he was for a mortal shock to find that he had killed a hermit, who lay mortally wounded on the ground, with a half-filled pitcher of water lying near him. Seeing Dashrath, Shrawan Kumar briefed him about the whole situation, and implored the young prince not to waste time but to fill the pitcher with water and take it to his parents, asking them to quench their thirst. If they wish to know what happened to their son, then Dashrath must tell them truthfully the whole event as it happened.

Making this last wish to Dashrath, the young hermit, Shrawan Kumar, died. Shocked and confounded beyond measure, Dashrath did as asked by the dying hermit, as he feared severe repercussions on him if he failed to carry out the last wish of a dying man.

When Dashrath approached the blind parents of Shrawan Kumar and asked them to drink water, they could immediately recognize from his voice that he was not their son. When asked who he was and what had happened to their son, Dashrath narrated everything. The distraught and utterly crestfallen parents then asked Dashrath to take them to the place where their son Shrawan Kumar's body lay. Upon reaching the spot, the two elderly parents of Shrawan Kumar wailed and lamented gravely, and out of grief for their son they died too. But at the time of death, they cursed Dashrath that one day he would be separated from his son whom he loved the most, and then he too would die out of grief for him even as they (the two elderly couple) are dying in grief of their own son Shrawan Kumar.

It is this incident that Dashrath is reminded of at this hour of his own death.

This story of Shrawan Kumar is narrated in detail by king Dashrath of Ayodhya to his queen Kaushalya in (a) Valmiki's Ramayana, Ayodhya Kand, Canto nos. 63-64; and (b) Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 19-40.]

Verse no. 11:

विप्रोषितकुमारम् तद्राज्यमस्तमितेश्वरम्।
रन्धान्वेषणदक्षाणाम् दिवषामामिषतताम् ययौ॥ १२-११

viproṣitakumāram tadrājyamastamiteśvaram|
randhrānveṣaṇadakṣāṇām divṣāmāmiṣatatām yayau || 12-11

12-11. The kingdom whose king had died, and from which all the princes had gone away¹, literally became orphaned. Such a kingdom which does not have anyone to protect it and safeguard its interests becomes an easy prey to jealous enemies who would use this void to attack it and make good of the opportunity.

[Note--¹Ayodhya's king Dashrath had died, and his four sons were out of the kingdom. Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to the forest, and their other two siblings, Bharat and Shatrughan, had gone to visit their maternal uncle's place. This created a void which the enemies of the kingdom would like to exploit.]

Verse no. 12:

अथानाथाः प्रकृतयो मातृबन्धुनिवासिनम्।
मौलैरानाययामासुर्भरतम् स्तम्भिताश्रुभिः॥ १२-१२

athānāthāḥ prakṛtayo mātṛbandhunivāsinam|
maulairānāyayāmāsurbharatam stambhitāśrubhiḥ || 12-12

12-12. The loyal ministers of the kingdom sent reliable messengers, who were intelligent enough to keep the secret to themselves and resilient enough to hide their tears of grief, to go and fetch Bharat from his maternal uncle's place forthwith.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 157. These messengers were briefed that they were not to tell Bharat about anything that had happened back home in Ayodhya, but just tell him that the royal priest, sage Vashistha, wants to meet him urgently.]

Verse no. 13:

श्रुत्वा तथाविधम् मृत्युम् कैकेयीतनयः पितुः।
मातुर्न केवलम् स्वस्याः श्रियोऽप्यासीत्पराङ्मुखः॥ १२-१३

śrutvā tathāvidham mṛtyum kaikeyītanayaḥ pituḥ|
māturna kevalam svasyāḥ śriyo'pyāsitparāṅmukhaḥ || 12-13

12-13. When Bharat returned home and learnt of the developments and the death of his father, he was rudely shaken to such an extent that he not only developed hatred for his mother Kaikeyi and turned his face away from her, but also began to loathe the crown and the privileges of kingship associated with it (for all times to come).

[Note--When Bharat came to know that the cause of his father's death and the forest exile of his dear brother Lord Ram, with whom Sita and Laxman too had gone away, was the greed of crown of his wicked mother Kaikeyi, he was speechless. He was dumbfounded and decided that very moment that he would have nothing to do with either her (Kaikeyi) nor the crown the greed for which had been at the center of all this mischief. He was overwhelmed with grief and dismay, and lamented sorely that all this misfortune had unfolded in his name.

Ram Charit Manas describes vividly how Bharat had scolded his mother, and how he had flatly spurned the crown, saying that it rightly belonged to Lord Ram and not to him. Refer respectively to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 160-to Doha no. 162; and (ii) Doha no. 177-to Doha no. 183.]

Verse no. 14:

**ससैन्यश्चान्वगाद्रामम् दर्शितानाश्रमालयैः।
तस्य पश्यन्ससौमित्रेरुदश्रुर्वसतिद्रुमान्॥ १२-१४**

sasainyaścānvagādrāmam darśitānāśramālayaiḥ|
tasya paśyansasaumitrerudaśrurvasatidrumān || 12-14

12-14. Bharat collected an army and embarked on a mission to search for Lord Ram in the forest¹. When the dwellers of road-side hermitages showed Bharat the trees in whose shade Lord Ram had rested for a while before moving ahead, tears swelled and dropped from Bharat's eyes².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no.186-to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 188.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 199; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 216; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 221.]

Verse no. 15:

**चित्रकूटवनस्थम् च कथितस्वर्गतिर्गुरोः।
लक्ष्म्या निमन्त्रयांचक्रे तमनुच्छिष्टसंपदा॥ १२-१५**

citrakūṭavanastham ca kathitasvargatirguroḥ|
lakṣmyā nimantrayāñcakre tamanucchiṣṭasampadā || 12-15

12-15. When Bharat reached Chitrakoot where Lord Ram resided at that time, he informed the Lord about the death of their father (Dashrath)¹. Bharat told the Lord that he has not touched the crown, and that he should return home and accept the throne, and look after the affairs of the kingdom.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 247.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 268-to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 268.

Bharat told Lord Ram that he has brought along all the paraphernalia needed for anointing the Lord as the king. But in case the Lord was reluctant to return because of his father's orders, then let Laxman return home and he (Bharat) would replace him and accompany the Lord in the forest. Another option was to let the three brothers (Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman) stay in the forest, and Lord Ram and Sita return home. This clearly showed Bharat's sincerity.]

Verse no. 16:

स हि प्रथमजे तस्मिन्नकृतश्रीपरिग्रहे।
परिवेत्तारमात्मानम् मेने स्वीकरणाद्भुवः॥ १२-१६

sa hi prathamaje tasminnakṛtāśrīparigrahe|
parivettāramātmānam mene svīkaraṇādbhuvah || 12-16

12-16. Bharat thought to himself that religious scriptures have prohibited the younger brother from marrying before his elder brother does, and such a marriage is considered as wrong and foul, as it violates the strictures of the religious scriptures. A king is regarded as a husband in relation to his kingdom just like the case of a married man is regarded as the husband of his wife.

Therefore, since Bharat was the younger brother of Lord Ram, it would be outright sinful for him to accept the crown of the kingdom and become its king when his elder brother Lord Ram, the rightful claimant of the throne, was not allowed to do so, or that the Lord was not given the crown inspite of his being present in the kingdom.

Verse no. 17:

तमशक्यमपाक्रष्टुम् निदेशात्स्वर्गिणः पितुः।
ययाचे पादुके पश्चात्कर्तुम् राज्याधिदेवते॥ १२-१७

tamaśakyamapākṛṣṭum nideśātsvargiṇaḥ pituḥ|
yayāce pādūke paścātkartum rājyādhidevate || 12-17

12-17. But Lord Ram did not budge from his resolve to obey his father's words (to stay in the forest for fourteen years). Finding no other alternative, Bharat requested Lord Ram to give his wooden sandals as a token to represent him, and pledged that he (Bharat) would install them on the throne and carry out his duties of looking after the affairs of the kingdom as a faithful servant on behalf of the Lord¹.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 316; and (ii) Doha no. 323; (iii) Doha no. 325.]

Verse no. 18:

स विसृष्टस्तथेत्युक्त्वा भ्रात्रा नैवाविशत्पुरीम्।
नन्दिग्रामगतस्तस्य राज्यम् न्यासमिवाभुनक्॥ १२-१८

sa visr̥ṣṭastathetyuktṡvā bhrātrā naivāviśatpurīm|
nandigrāmagatastasya rājyam nyāsamivābhunak || 12-18

12-18. Lord Ram agreed with Bharat's request and gave the latter his wooden sandals. Bharat returned home but did not enter the city. He had the Lord's sandals installed on the throne, and himself retired to the outskirts of the city to a place called Nandigram from where he looked after the affairs of the kingdom as a custodian¹.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 323-to Doha no. 325.]

Verse no. 19:

दृढभक्तिरिति ज्येष्ठे राज्यतृष्णापराङ्मुखः।
मातुः पापस्य भरतः प्रायश्चित्तमिवाकरोत्॥ १२-१९

dr̥ḍhabhaktiriti jyeṣṭhe rājyatr̥ṣṇāparāṅmukhaḥ|
mātuḥ pāpasya bharataḥ prāyaścittamivākarot || 12-19

12-19. In this way, by declining to accept the crown, renouncing all attachment with the material pleasures of the world, and affirming his unequivocal devotion for Lord Ram, Bharat not only showed the purity of heart and the integrity of his character beyond any doubt, but also did atonement to clear his name from the ignominy brought to him by the sins of his mother Kaikeyi.

[Note--By his noble behaviour, Bharat proved to the world that he had no role to play in the dirty scheme of his wicked mother who had been instrumental in the death of king Dashrath, as well as sending Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman to the forest. The citizens had originally doubted Bharat's integrity and thought that he was definitely involved in the conspiracy, and there was a quiet murmur in this connection¹. But when Bharat openly rebuked his mother Kaikeyi and said that he would not like to see her face for the rest of his life², and declared his intention to refuse the crown and go and bring Lord Ram back from the forest, he endeared himself to all the citizens of Ayodhya³. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) ¹Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48; (ii) ²Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 161-to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 162; (iii) and ³Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 185.

The fact that Bharat did not talk or see the face of Kaikeyi as long as he lived is explicitly mentioned in Tulsidas' Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 37.]

Verse no. 20:

रामोऽपि सह वैदेह्या वने वन्येन वर्तयन्।

चचार सानुजः शान्तो वृद्धेक्ष्वाकुव्रतम् युवा॥ १२-२०

rāmo'pi saha vaidehyā vane vanyena vartayan|
cacāra sānujaḥ śānto vṛddheḥṣvākuvratam yuvā || 12-20

12-20. In the meantime, Lord Ram, along with Sita and Laxman, began to live a life of austerity, abstaining from all pleasures of the senses and renouncing all attachment with the material charms of the world, even though they were young in age, a time when usually youth like to enjoy the world and its pleasures. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman's life of austerity and penance was in sharp contrast with other great kings of the Ikshvaku (or Ikshwaku) race who would observe such a life only in their ripe old age.

Verse no. 21:

प्रभावस्तम्भितच्छायमाश्रितः स वनस्पतिम्।

कदाचिदङ्के सीतायाः शिश्ये किञ्चिदिव श्रमात्॥ १२-२१

prabhāvastambhitacchāyamāśritaḥ sa vanaspatim|
kadācīdanke sītāyāḥ śiśye kiñcidiva śramāt || 12-21

12-21. One day, Lord Ram was so tired that he lay down to rest under the shade of a tree, with his head on the lap of Sita for the sake of comfort. The Lord had cast his magical charm so that the shade was stable, for it did not fade with the passage of time and the movement of the sun in the sky.

[Note--Normally, as the sun moved in the sky from east to west, the shade of the tree would also change its location accordingly. But in this case, the shade remained static. From a practical angle, it means that the tree was so huge and its foliage so thick that the shade of the tree covered quite a large area below it. Hence, the movement of the sun had no practical impact on the area covered by the shade on the ground.]

Verse no. 22:

ऐन्द्रिः किल नखैस्तस्या विददार स्तनौ दिवजः।

प्रियोपभोगचिह्नेषु पौरोभाग्यमिवाचरन्॥ १२-२२

aindriḥ kila nakhaistasyā vidadāra stanau dvijaḥ|
priyopabhogacihneṣu paurobhāgyamivācaran || 12-22

12-22. It so happened that Jayant, the crooked son of Indra (the god of heaven), assumed the form of a crow and swooped down on the couple (Lord Ram and Sita), and deeply scratched (vidadāra) the two breasts of Sita (stanau dvijaḥ) with its claws (nakhaistasyā), whereby flesh was exposed and blood oozed out from the wound. Jayant wanted to give Lord Ram a bad name as those who were not privy to this incident would invariably think that in a moment of overriding passion, the Lord

had made this wound by his own finger nails (to tease her when he was playing with her).

[Note--This incident is narrated by Tulsidas with a little variation in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 2. Tulsidas says that Jayant pricked Sita's feet, instead of her breasts. This Tulsidas did purposely to maintain decorum and dignity of his narration.

Later on, when Hanuman met Sita in Lanka, she told him about this event, asking him to repeat it before Lord Ram so that he is convinced that Hanuman has indeed met Sita, as no other person was aware of this incident except Sita and Lord Ram--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

Verse no. 23:

तस्मिन्नस्थदिषीकास्त्रम् रामो रामावबोधितः।

आत्मानम् मुमुचे तस्मादेकनेत्रव्ययेन सः॥ १२-२३

tasminnasthadiṣīkāstram rāmo rāmāvabodhitah |
ātmanam mumuce tasmādekanetravyayena saḥ || 12-23

12-23. Sita woke up Lord Ram immediately. The Lord picked up a twig lying nearby, and using it as an arrow he aimed at Jayant and shot it. Jayant panicked, and ran hither and thither in all the directions of the world, but saw the symbolic arrow of Lord Ram, that resemble a missile, pursuing him wherever he went.

But when he was exhausted, the Lord spared his life only after he took one eye of Jayant as punishment, thereby making the wicked crow one-eyed. {It is because Lord Ram's weapon can't go in vain.}

Verse no. 24:

रामस्त्वासन्नदेशत्वाद्भरतागमनम् पुनः।

आशङ्क्योत्सुकसारङ्गाम् चित्रकूटस्थलीम् जहौ॥ १२-२४

rāmastvāsannadeśatvādbharatāgamanam punaḥ |
āśaṅkyotsukasāraṅgām citrakūṭasthalīm jahau || 12-24

12-24. After spending some days at Chitrakoot, Lord Ram left it and moved ahead into the deeper parts of the forest. It was because all the residents of nearby villages and hermitages had become so well aware of his presence that someone or the other kept paying a visit to the Lord. Besides this, the Lord feared that since his location was no longer a secret for the citizens of Ayodhya, there were probabilities of either Bharat himself or small and large groups from the city visiting him too often to meet him, something he wanted to avoid.

Lord Ram wanted to live anonymously, in peace and tranquillity. A virtual stream of visitors would rob the Lord of quietude which he longed for. So he thought it was wise to move to a new location.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 3.]

Verse no. 25:

प्रययावातिथेषु वसन्नृषिकुलेषु सः।
दक्षिणाम् दिशमृक्षेषु वार्षिकेष्विव भास्करः॥ १२-२५

prayayāvātithyeṣu vasannṛṣikuleṣu saḥ|
dakṣiṇām diśamṛkṣeṣu vārṣikeṣviva bhāskaraha || 12-25

12-25. Just like the case of the sun passing through the ten asterisms (called Nakshatras) of the rainy season, starting with Ardra and ending with Swaati nakshatra (i.e. the onset of the rainy season and its end respectively), as it moves in the southern direction of the celestial globe (i.e. from the northern solstice to the southern solstice), so likewise Lord Ram left Chitrakoot and headed in the southern direction (i.e. in the direction where Lanka was located, and also the direction which would take the Lord further away from the inhabited parts of the forest where hermitages were located). On the way, Lord Ram paid visits to hermitages of great sages and ascetics to seek their blessings.

Verse no. 26:

बभौ तमनुगच्छन्ती विदेहाधिपतेः सुता।
प्रतिषिद्धापि कैकेय्या लक्ष्मीरिव गुणोन्मुखी॥ १२-२६

babhau tamanugacchantī videhādhipateḥ sutā|
pratiṣiddhāpi kaikeyyā lakṣmīriva guṇonmukhī || 12-26

12-26. Though the wickedness of Kaikeyi had prevented the deity of the kingdom, called 'Rajya Laxmi', to associate herself with Lord Ram, but Sita, who was a personified form of goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of wealth and prosperity, accompanied the Lord and followed him to the forest out of her reverence for the Lord's excellence of virtues and character.

[Note--Sita was Laxmi herself personified, while Rajya Laxmi is also another form of the goddess of wealth and prosperity as she represents the wealth of a prosperous kingdom like Ayodhya. Kaikeyi, by her wickedness, succeeded in barring Lord Ram from having access to the Rajya Laxmi of the kingdom of Ayodhya, but she couldn't prevent Lord Ram in having closeness with Sita who voluntarily followed the Lord to the forest.]

Verse no. 27:

अनसूयातिसृष्टेन पुण्यगन्धेन काननम्।
सा चकाराङ्गरागेण पुष्पोच्चलितषट्पदम्॥ १२-२७

anasūyātisṛṣṭena puṇyagandhena kānanam|
sā cakārāṅgarāgeṇa puṣpocalitaṣaṭpadam || 12-27

12-27. When Lord Ram moved ahead and reached the hermitage of sage Atri¹, then the sage's chaste wife named Anusuiya welcomed and honoured Sita by applying a fragrant ointment on her body which had such a sweet and pleasant scent that the bees of the forest who were hovering over fragrant flowers, eager to get an opportunity to drink nectar from them, got attracted by this scent, and leaving the flowers behind all of them came to hover over Sita.

[Note--Arrival of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in the hermitage of sage Atri, and Sita's meeting with Anusuiya has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha / Sortha no. 3; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 4 respectively.]

Verse no. 28:

संध्याभ्रकपिशस्तस्य विराधो नाम राक्षसः।
अतिष्ठन्मार्गमावृत्य रामस्येन्दोरिव ग्रहः॥ १२-२८

saṁdhyābhṛakapiśastasya virādho nāma rākṣasaḥ|
atiṣṭhanmārgamāvṛtya rāmasyendoriva grahaḥ || 12-28

12-28. When Lord Ram left the sage's hermitage and moved ahead on the forest path, a fierce demon named Viradha¹, who was a monster as foreboding as the dark cloud of early evening (that blocks sunlight even before the sun actually sets), blocked the Lord's path in the same way as Rahu (a trunk-less demon with only a large gaping mouth) comes to block the path of the moon during the lunar eclipse².

[Note--¹This episode of Viradha blocking Lord Ram's path is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7. Viradha had a huge body; he menacingly blocked Lord Ram's way. Lord Ram slayed him.

²The story of Rahu blocking the path of the Moon is as follows: The legend has it that Rahu was the eldest son of the demon Viprachitti and his wife Shinghikaa. His younger brothers were Ilvala, Vaataapi, Narak amongst others. When Lord Vishnu, disguised as the beautiful Mohini, was distributing the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit to the Gods during the episode of the churning of the ocean as told in the Purans, Rahu assumed the form of a God and surreptitiously entered the lines of the Gods to take this Amrit. When his cheating was discovered, Vishnu cut-off his head with his weapon called the Chakra Sudarshan (a circular saw-like discus). But it so happened that before the head was severed Rahu had already drunk some Amrit, and so did not die. His head and torso became two independent entities. The former was called 'Rahu' and the latter 'Ketu'. The Ketu is seen as the comet that sometimes crosses the night sky.

Since the Moon God and the Sun God had betrayed him, Rahu takes revenge by devouring them periodically to satisfy his hunger. He devours them when they are in their full glory—viz. he devours the Moon God during the full moon night, and the Sun God only during the day time, either when the sun rises or during its journey

across the sky, but never at sunset when the sun is already losing its radiance and is on the decline.

Again, since the head of Rahu was severed from the neck, hence both the Moon God and the Sun God re-emerge from the lower end of the head after they have been devoured by the mouth of Rahu. This is why the moon and the sun appear to be getting gradually cut-off from view from one end of their discs, symbolizing their gradually entering the mouth of Rahu as the latter begins to devour them. Then for some time they remain dark or obstructed from view symbolizing the period when they remain inside the mouth of Rahu. Finally, they gradually regain their original shape symbolizing their ejection from the lower end of Rahu's neck where it was severed from the trunk.

Thus we see that the mythological origin of the solar and lunar eclipse can be traced to this event of the churning of the ocean and the demon Rahu getting his head cut-off because he had cheated Vishnu in an attempt to drink Amrit. But having already drunk this elixir, he could not die; the head became Rahu and the trunk became Ketu (a comet). Because of this enmity, Rahu extracted a boon that he would eat the sun and the moon periodically when he felt hungry, which, according to mythology, he does during the solar and lunar eclipses respectively. The sun or the moon enter his mouth (the beginning of the eclipse), and emerge from his severed throat (marking the end of eclipse).

The story of Rahu and his head getting severed by Lord Vishnu's discus appears in *Srimad Bhagwat MahaPuran*, Chapter 8, Canto 9, especially verse nos. 24-26.

The story of why Rahu devours the sun and the moon periodically on different occasions has been narrated in *Anand Ramayan*, *Saar Kand*, *Sarga 13*, verse nos. 179-183. It was narrated to Lord Ram by sage Agastya when the Lord wanted to know about it. Briefly the story is as follows:

Lord Ram asked sage Agastya to tell him why Indra, the king of gods, had given the sun to Rahu to vent his ire upon. The sage replied: "The demon named Rahu had attained immortality by drinking Amrit, the ambrosia of immortality. This resulted in his occupying space that was reserved for senior gods in heaven. These gods are represented by the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus. Since Rahu was primarily evil by nature, he began to torment his neighbouring gods or planets. To get rid of this perpetual problem, the gods got together and told Rahu to vent his ire on the Sun and the Moon, and leave the rest of them alone. The gods thought that humans on earth would do religious deeds, make charities and perform penances during the time when Rahu attacks either of them, and the good effects of such deeds and charities and penances would be able to liberate the Sun and the Moon from the clutches of Rahu. This is why during the solar and the lunar eclipses people do all sorts of worship, make charities and sacrifices, and do other kinds of religious deeds. These activities please Rahu who satisfies himself by accepting such offerings; he withdraws himself, and leaves the Sun and the Moon alone. This devouring of the sun and the moon by Rahu causes the solar and the lunar eclipses respectively, and the good effects of various religious deeds done by humans during this period result in Rahu withdrawing from the scene, and sparing both the sun and the moon from further torments." (Verse nos. 179-183)

Actually however, as modern science has shown us, the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse is due to the earth's shadow falling on the moon's surface when it comes in the path of this shadow during its revolution around the earth. The solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the sun and the earth, thereby blocking the

view of the sun from the surface of the earth. It is interesting to note that this scientific fact was known to the great Rishis (sages and seers) of ancient times, to those who had preached the Upanishads, and it is clearly mentioned in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says “When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon’s curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event, and the darkness on the moon’s disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments.”

Similarly, the solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the shiny surface of the sun and the view from earth, thereby blocking the former’s view from the latter’s surface.

The elongated torso of Rahu came to known as ‘Ketu’ and it is recognized as the comet in modern science. That is why sighting of the comet is regarded as a bad omen.

Both Rahu and Ketu are placed amongst the nine planets. They represent the two nodal points where the celestial equator cuts the ecliptic.

In iconography, Rahu is depicted as just a head or even as a snake’s hood.

In Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ we find that a reference is given to this mythological phenomenon in its Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12. When Lord Ram asks his companions what they think of the dark spots on the moon, one of them said that they are caused by the wound inflicted upon the moon by Rahu.]

Verse no. 29:

स जहार तयोर्मध्ये मैथिलीम् लोकशोषणः।

नभोनभस्ययोर्वृष्टिमवग्रह इवान्तरे॥ १२-२९

sa jahāra tayormadhye maithilīm lokaśoṣaṇaḥ|
nabhonabhasyayorvr̥ṣṭimavagraha ivāntare || 12-29

12-29. Just as some misfortune or malignant star snatches rainfall from the earth during the two rainy seasons of Srawan (mid July to mid August) and Bhadon (mid August to mid September), causing drought and making the people suffer due to an absence of rain, likewise the monster Viradha snatched Sita, who was walking between Lord Ram and Laxman, away from them.

[Note--Srawan is the fifth month of the Hindu calendar, and Bhandon the sixth month. During these two months that correspond respectively from mid July to mid August, and from mid August to mid September, there is normally heavy rainfall. But it may happen that due to some misfortune, there is no rain and drought sets in. The earth becomes parched and the people are subjected to a lot of suffering due to the failure of rain. Crops wither, the heat of the preceding summer further scorches the earth, and

water sources such as rivers, ponds and lakes dry up or their water level drops to an alarming level.

Likewise, when Viradha snatched Sita as she walked between Lord Ram and Laxman, it made the two brothers excessively anxious and peeved.]

Verse no. 30:

**तम् विनिष्पिष्य काकुत्स्थौ पुरा दूषयति स्थलीम्।
गन्धेनाशुचिना चेति वसुधायाम् निचख्नतुः॥ १२-३०**

tam viniṣpiṣya kākutsthau purā dūṣayati sthalīm|
gandhenāśucinā ceti vasudhāyām nicakhnatuḥ || 12-30

12-30. Lord Ram and Laxman, the two great descendants of Kukustha race (kākutsthau), immediately slayed Viratha and buried his dead body in a deep pit in the ground to prevent foul smell from spoiling the environment and contaminating the surrounding area.

Verse no. 31:

**पञ्चवद्याम् ततो रामः शासनात्कुम्भजन्मनः।
अनपोढस्थितिस्तस्थौ विन्ध्याद्रिः प्रकृताविव॥ १२-३१**

pañcavaṭyām tato rāmaḥ śāsanātkumbhajanmanah|
anapoḍhasthitistasthau vindhyādrīḥ prakṛtāviva || 12-31

12-31. Just as Mt. Vindhya had become stable on the instructions of the great sage Agastya¹, so did Lord Ram stayed at Panchavati forest while observing self-control and austerities on the instructions of the sage (whom the Lord met on the way)².

[Note--¹The story related to Mt. Vindhya and sage Agastya is briefly as follows: The story of sage Agastya stopping Mt. Vindychal from rising too high in the sky is narrated in the Mahabharat, Vanaparva, Chapter 104.

The Sun-God, who goes around Mt. Sumeru, the golden mountain, daily, was once asked by the patron deity of Mt. Vindychal to go around this mountain as well. The Sun-God, however, declined, saying that his course or path through the heavens (sky) has been determined by the Creator, and hence he has no authority to violate it by going around some other mountain. This annoyed the deity of Mt. Vindychal who decided to raise the mountain to such an height that it would stand in the way of the Sun-God's course through the firmament, thereby obstructing his path and preventing him from circling Mt. Sumeru.

The gods residing on Mt. Sumeru were alarmed and flummoxed at this sudden and extraordinary development. They approached the mighty sage Agastya and sought his help to restrain Mt. Vindychal from getting higher and obstructing the path of the Sun. The sage devised a stratagem and went to the Mt. Vindychal, and asked its deity to give him way so that he can move on towards the south direction from the northern plains. The deity representing Mt. Vindychal prostrated before the revered sage to pay respects to him, and allowed him to cross over its body (i.e. the

mountain) to the other side. The sage went to the other side but asked the deity keep the mountain thus prostrated (i.e. lie low) till the time the sage came back from his mission. The deity had to obey the sage. However, the sage never returned that way, and hence Mt. Vindiyachal kept on lying low ever since that time. In this way, the wise sage had successfully prevented Mt. Vindiyachal from rising heavenwards and obstructing the path of the Sun.

²Sage Agastya: Sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Samhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a ‘Brahm-rishi’ or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantara (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as ‘Kumbha’. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vashistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

According to the story of Ramayana, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had visited the sage when they had gone to the forest. The sage lived in the most formidable and inhospitable part of the southern forests, beyond the Vindya range of mountains, that was known as Dandak, or Dandakaranya. One of his disciples was sage Sutikshan whom Lord Ram had blessed prior to going to meet sage Agastya. It was sage Agastya who had advised Lord Ram to go and dwell for some time at Panchavti.

This episode of Lord Ram meeting sage Agastya is narrated in (a) Tulsidas’ version of the Ramayana that is known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, in its Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 13; and (b) Veda Vyas’ version known as the “Adhyatma Ramayan”, in its Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-50.]

Verse no. 32:

रावणावरजा तत्र राघवम् मदनातुरा।

अभिपेदे निदाघार्ता व्यालीव मलयद्रुमम्॥ १२-३२

rāvaṇāvarajā tatra rāghavam madanāturā|

abhipede nidāghārtā vyālīva malayadrumam || 12-32

12-32. At Panchavati, the younger sister of Ravana named Supernakha became so enchanted by Lord Ram's beautiful form that passion overcame her and she came to the Lord (with an intention of establishing a relationship with him)¹, just like the case of a female serpent comes to find comfort under the cool shade of the sandalwood tree when she is tormented by the heat of the sun in her hole in the ground.

[Note--¹This episode of Supernakha coming to Lord Ram disguised as a damsel, with passion burning her blood with desire, asking the Lord to have a conjugal relationship with her is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 17.

Her name Supernakha was because she had broad fan-like nails--refer: verse no. 38 herein below.]

Verse no. 33:

सा सीतासंनिधावेव तम् वव्रे कथितान्वया।

अत्यारूढो हि नारीणामकालजो मनोभवः॥ १२-३३

sā sītāsamnidhāveva tam vavre kathitānvayā |
atyārūḍho hi nārīṇāmakālajño manobhavaḥ || 12-33

12-33. When Supernakha met Lord Ram, first she introduced herself and informed the Lord about her lineage. After that, throwing all caution to the wind, she told the Lord that she wants to marry him, that also in front of Sita.

Verily indeed, it is true that when a promiscuous woman of low virtue is overcome by passion, she does not pay attention to what she is doing and saying or what situation she is in.

[Note--Supernakha broke all limits of good behaviour, etiquette, morality and decency by asking Lord Ram to marry her while Sita was close by. It was really a funny and embarrassing situation to ask a married man to accept a proposal of conjugal relationship with another unknown woman in front of his wife. But Supernakha, being a demoness, was not accustomed to observing niceties of social behaviour.]

Verse no. 34:

कलत्रवानहम् बाले कनीयांसम् भजस्व मे।

इति रामो वृषस्यन्तीम् वृषस्कन्धः शशास ताम्॥ १२-३४

kalatravānaham bāle kaṇīyāṁsam bhajasva me |
iti rāmo vṛṣasyantīm vṛṣaskandhaḥ śaśāsa tām || 12-34

12-34. When Lord Ram, who had broad and muscular shoulders like that of a healthy bull, heard this incredulous proposition of Supernakha, he was taken aback.

Then, recovering quickly from his shock, the Lord said to Supernakha: "Oh damsel! I am a married man (so I cannot accept your proposal). But you can approach my younger brother (Laxman)¹.

[Note--In the forest, Laxman always maintained a respectable distance and never disturbed Lord Ram and Sita. He gave them enough space for privacy by staying at a short distance away from them, close enough to come quickly when needed, but distant enough to give the Lord and Sita space for privacy. If the hermitage had only one room, then Laxman would sit outside the door. If it had two chambers, then Laxman lived in the other chamber.

In any case, when Supernakha came to visit Lord Ram, it is obvious that Laxman too must have been present there, as without his permission no outsider could enter the hermitage where they lived. When Laxman heard what Supernakha said, and Lord Ram's answer to her, he got a hint at what the Lord wanted. So he became alert and waited for an instruction from the Lord to take the next step. It was by now clear to him that this unknown lady was a wicked woman, as no lady in her senses would make such a nonsensical proposal to a man while his wife was present on the occasion.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-16 that precede Doha no. 17.]

Verse no. 35:

ज्येष्ठाभिगमनात्पूर्वम् तेनाप्यनभिनन्दिताम्।

साऽभूद्रामाश्रया भूयो नदीवोभयकूलभाक्॥ १२-३५

jyeṣṭhābhigamanātpūrvam tenāpyanabhinanditām|
sā'bhūdrāmāśrayā bhūyo nadīvobhayakūlabhāk || 12-35

12-35. Supernakha immediately approached Laxman who told her that since she had already approached his elder brother Lord Ram with a proposal of marriage, so she is like a mother for him. Hence, it is not feasible for him to accept her proposal to marry her. Thus rebuked by Laxman, she once again went to Lord Ram¹.

At that time, her condition was like a river which flows with its currents tossing and turning between its two banks, touching both but not staying for any length of time with either as the river moves ahead on its course².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-17 that precede Doha no. 17.

²A river touches both its banks with its currents oscillating between the two as the river flows onwards. But while the current of the river is not static but always on the move, the banks remain steady and unmoving. So likewise, the fickle minded Supernakha was not sure whom to marry, for first she approached Lord Ram and then suddenly went to Laxman with the same proposal just like the current of a river oscillating from one bank to the other. She appeared like the river tossing and turning between its two banks because she went back and forth between Lord Ram and Laxman.]

Verse no. 36:

संरम्भम् मैथिलीहासः क्षणसौम्याम् निनाय ताम्।
निवातस्तिमिताम् वेलाम् चन्द्रोदय इवोदधेः॥ १२-३६

saṁrambham maithilīhāsaḥ kṣaṇasaumyām nināya tām|
nivātaśtimitām velām candrodaya ivodadheḥ || 12-36

12-36. When Supernakha observed that during the preceding discourse, Sita laughed (maithilīhāsaḥ) (as if all this thing was a joke), she lost her composure and became furious as she reverted back to her original form of a fearful and ugly demoness (because she took Sita's behaviour as an umbrage and an insult to her self-respect), just like case of an ocean whose waters had hitherto remained calm when there was no disturbance from wind, suddenly becomes agitated and starts heaving when the full moon rises in the sky.

[Note--Although Lord Ram and Laxman had spurned Supernakha's overtures, but they stayed cool during their interaction with her. So Supernakha too remained calm just like the surface of the ocean remaining calm when there is no wind. But Sita's laughing at her was the fuse that ignited her anger. Here, Sita's charming and radiant face is compared to the full moon, and just as the appearance of the moon makes the ocean agitated, so did Sita's calm and nonchalant attitude infuriated Supernakha. She took Sita's behaviour as a slight on her dignity. This anger of Supernakha is also because of jealousy with Sita as she felt that the latter was the reason why Lord Ram did not accept her proposal of marriage. Sita's smiles and laughs added fuel to fire, leading to Supernakha losing her cool and reverting back to her furious form of a demoness. It must be remembered that she was not an ordinary demoness, but the sister of the king of demons, i.e. Ravana. This relationship with the demon king had made Supernakha haughty and arrogant by nature, and therefore she was very furious as she was accustomed to having her own way, and did not expect anyone to dare to oppose or rebuke her.]

Verse no. 37:

फलमस्योपहासस्य सद्यः प्राप्स्यसि पश्य माम्।
मृग्याः परिभवो व्याघ्र्यामित्यवेहि त्वया कृतम्॥ १२-३७

phalamasyopahāsasya sadyaḥ prāpsyasi paśya mām|
mṛgyāḥ paribhavo vyāghryāmityaavehi tvayā kṛtam || 12-37

12-37. Supernakha roared at Sita with a venom in her voice: "Look, you will soon get the fruit of taunting me with a scornful smile. What you have done is like a doe insulting a tigress. {Just like the result of a doe insulting a tigress is never good for the doe, so likewise your insulting me is not going to be good for you too.}"

Verse no. 38:

इत्युक्त्वा मैथिलीम् भर्तुरङ्के निविशतीम् भयात्।
रूपम् शूर्पणखा नाम्नः सदृशम् प्रत्यपद्यत॥ १२-३८

ityuktvā maithilīm bharturaṅke niviśatīm bhayāt|
rūpam śūrpaṇakhā nāmnaḥ sadṛśam pratyapadyata || 12-38

12-38. Glaring menacingly at Sita, who was terrified and cowering for cover by the side of Lord Ram, the demoness Supernakha abandoned her assumed charming form of a young woman (with which she had tried to lure Lord Ram) and reverted back to her original form that was befitting her name, i.e. a horrible-looking demoness with large fan-like nails.

Verse no. 39:

लक्ष्मणः प्रथमम् श्रुत्वा कोकिलामञ्जुवादिनीम्।
शिवाघोरस्वनाम् पश्चाद्बुधे विकृतेति ताम्॥ १२-३९

lakṣmaṇaḥ prathamam śrutvā kokilāmañjuvādinīm|
śivāghorasvanām paścādbubudhe vikṛteti tām || 12-39

12-39. When Laxman observed that while a few moments ago she was speaking sweetly like a cuckoo and all of a sudden she was howling like a female jackal, he realised that this lady is a fierce demoness (who is accustomed to changing her form and attitude like a chameleon).

{Laxman immediately understood that the lady who seemed so alluring and sweet a while ago is not what she pretended to be, but a violent demoness in reality.}

Verse no. 40:

पर्णशालामथ क्षिप्रम् विकृष्टासिः प्रविश्य सः।
वैरूप्यपीनरुक्त्येन भीषणाम् तामयोजयत्॥ १२-४०

parṇaśālāmatha kṣipram vikṛṣṭāsiḥ praviśya saḥ|
vairūpyapaunaruktyena bhīṣaṇām tāmajayāt || 12-40

12-40. So therefore, Laxman immediately drew his sword, entered the hermitage, and sliced-off the nose and ears of the hideous-looking demoness (Supernakha).

Verse no. 41:

सा वक्रनखधारिण्या वेणुकर्कशपर्वया।
अङ्कुशाकारयाङ्गुल्या तावतर्जयदम्बरे॥ १२-४१

sā vakranakhadhāriṇyā veṇukarkaśaparvayā|
aṅkuśākārayāṅgulyā tāvatarjayadambare || 12-41

12-41. Deformed and made more hideous by having her nose and ears chopped-off, Supernakha ran upwards into the sky, hovering overhead and threatening the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) with her bent fingers that had sharp and craggy

nails, and hands that were as stiff as bamboo, giving an overall impression of an elephant's goad.

[Note--The goad has a long and sturdy handle, made usually of hard bamboo, with a pointed tip made of iron. Some versions of the goad, especially used to tame wild elephants, have an iron piece slightly curved inwards and having a pointed tip. Both types are used to control an elephant. The one with a straight handle and a pointed tip is used to pierce the animal's head or temple to control it, while the other type is used to prick the elephant on the side.

So, just like the elephant tamer threatens the animal by showing it the goad as the animal knows that if it does not obey, it would get pricked by the goad, so likewise Supernakha waved her hands menacingly at Lord Ram and Laxman, threatening them with dire consequences, and warning them of retribution for having deformed her.]

Verse no. 42:

**प्राप्य चाशु जनस्थानम् खरादिभ्यस्तथाविधम्।
रामोपक्रममाचख्यौ रक्षःपरिभवम् नवम्॥ १२-४२**

prāpya cāśu janasthānam kharādibhyastathāvidham|
rāmopakramamācakhyau rakṣaḥparibhavam navam || 12-42

12-42. Supernakha straightaway went to her place of residence in the depths of the forest, and without loss of time she narrated to the demon Khar and others how Lord Ram and Laxman had insulted her, and added salt over her wounds by deforming her. She instigated them to take revenge by saying that it was the first time that someone has dared to challenge the might of the demons, and a quick response was the need of the moment (for otherwise, the honour and dignity of the demons would be compromised for all times to come, and these two humans would become bolder, thereby endangering the rest of the demon race).

Verse no. 43:

**मुखावयवलूनाम् ताम् नैरृता यत्पुरो दधुः।
रामाभियायिनाम् तेषाम् तदेवाभूदमङ्गलम्॥ १२-४३**

mukhāvayavalūnām tām nairṛtā yatpuro dadhuḥ|
rāmābhiyāyinām teṣām tadevābhūdamaṅgalam || 12-43

12-43. Putting the mutilated Supernakha, whose nose and ears had been cut-off, in the front to serve as a guide to lead the demon army headed by Khar to the hermitage of Lord Ram, the demons had already invoked a bad omen for themselves, because when one goes out on some mission of importance, then at that time having a deformed person in the front, or even the sight of such a person, is regarded as an inauspicious sign that portends failure and setback.

{To wit, unknowingly and unwittingly, the demons dug their own graves by making a deformed Supernakha lead them to Lord Ram's hermitage. It was like voluntarily inviting death and catastrophe upon themselves.}

Verse no. 44:

उदायुधानात्पततस्तान्दृप्तान्प्रेक्ष्य राघवः।

निदधे विजयाशंसाम् चापे सीताम् च लक्ष्मणे॥ १२-४४

udāyudhānātpatatastāndr̥ptānpṛeṣya rāghavaḥ|
nidadhe vijayāśaṁsām cāpe sītām ca lakṣmaṇe || 12-44

12-44. When Lord Ram beheld the army of demons rushing towards his hermitage with weapons ready for attack, the Lord quickly weighed all the possibilities and concluded that he himself was competent to tackle this menace, and did not need help from Laxman.

So therefore, he entrusted the safety of Sita in Laxman's hands, and himself came out of the hermitage to face the attacking demon army.

Verse no. 45:

एको दाशरथिः कामम् यातुधानाः सहस्रशः।

ते तु यावन्त एवाजौ तावांश्च ददृशे स तैः॥ १२-४५

eko dāśarathiḥ kāmam yātudhānāḥ sahasraśaḥ|
te tu yāvanta evājau tāvāṁśca dadṛśe sa taiḥ || 12-45

12-45. Though Lord Ram was single and there were thousands of demon warriors, yet the way the Lord fought with extreme agility, quickly changing positions, that it created an impression for the demon army that many Ram's were on the ground fighting together, simultaneously, leading the attackers to become so confused that all their attempts to strike the Lord precisely were proving futile, and their attacks missed their target.

[Note--One moment Lord Ram was here, and the next moment he moved to another point on the ground. He did it so rapidly that it created an illusion of so many figures of the Lord standing side-by-side on the ground. When the demon soldiers threw one weapon, the Lord moved swiftly to another location so that the weapon missed its target.]

Verse no. 46:

असज्जनेन काकुत्स्थः प्रयुक्तमथ दूषणम्।

न चक्षमे शुभाचारः स दूषणमिवात्मनः॥ १२-४६

asajjanena kākutsthaḥ prayuktamatha dūṣaṇam|
na cakṣame śubhācāraḥ sa dūṣaṇamivātmanaḥ || 12-46

12-46. Just like an upright man, who conducts himself properly in accordance with the principles of probity and propriety, is unable to tolerate false accusations levelled against him by unscrupulous people of low moral, so likewise Lord Ram, who was always noble and untainted, could not come to terms with the wild and evil demon Dushan (brother of Khar) coming to attack him (by taking sides with Supernakha, though it was her own wickedness that had forced Lord Ram to deform her to teach her a lesson so that she does not repeat her mischief again).

[Note--Yielding to a bully only emboldens him. Lord Ram decided that if he spared the attackers who were prodded by Supernakha, then the consequences would be that they would always torment him during his long stay in the forest. So it was better to get rid of the nuisance right now.]

Verse no. 47:

तम् शरैः प्रतिजग्राह खरत्रिशिरसौ च सः।

क्रमशस्ते पुनस्तस्य चापात्सममिवोद्ययुः॥ १२-४७

tam śaraiḥ pratijagrāha kharatrisīrasau ca saḥ|
kramaśaste punastasya cāpātsamamivodyayuh || 12-47

12-47. Ram shot three arrows at Dushan, Khar and Trishira, one arrow aimed at each demon. The arrows were shot in such quick succession that they appeared to leave the Lord's bow simultaneously.

[Note--Lord Ram was a skilled archer. So he mounted three arrows on his bow and shot them in one go, just like a modern missile launching platform which has the ability to shoot multiple projectiles simultaneously. The string was pulled and released only once, and all the three arrows lunged forward all at once.]

Verse no. 47:

तैस्त्रयाणाम् शितैर्बाणैर्यथापूर्वविशुद्धिभिः।

आयुर्देहातिगैः पीतम् रुधिरम् तु पतत्रिभिः॥ १२-४८

taistrayāṇām śitairbāṇairyathāpūrvaviśuddhibhiḥ|
āyurdehātigaiḥ pītam rudhiram tu patatribhiḥ || 12-48

12-48. Those arrows entered and exited the bodies of the three demons so quickly that blood did not have time to coagulate and stick to them. The Lord's arrows were not thirsty for blood; they were not meant to drink the blood of the demons, but only end their lives, for the blood was meant to quench the thirst of birds of prey (such as vultures, who descended in droves and sucked every single drop of it).

[Note--The arrows had stupendous speed; they entered and left the body in a fraction of a millisecond. As they exited from the body through a minute hole made on the skin at the rear end of the body, whatever blood that stuck to them was wiped clean by

the pressure of the surrounding skin-tissue just like one cleans the handle of a table spoon by pressing a wiping cloth against it as the spoon is drawn outwards.

A hole was punctured on the body as soon as the arrows exited, and blood formed a thick clot around it. Then birds of prey descended and poked through these punctures, and drank blood to their heart's content.]

Verse no. 49:

**तस्मिन्नामशरोत्कृत्ते बले महति रक्षसाम्।
उत्थितम् ददृशेऽन्न्यच्च कबन्धेभ्यो न किञ्चन॥ १२-४९**

tasminrāmaśarotkr̥tte bale mahati rakṣasām|
utthitam dadṛśe'nnyacca kabandhebhyo na kiñcana || 12-49

12-49. Lord Ram decimated that large army of demons by slaying them quickly in such a way that after a short while the whole ground was covered by their headless trunks.

[Note--Lord Ram had sliced-off the heads of the demons. These heads were flung far and wide like a shower of countless meteors streaming across the sky, while the headless trunks tottered for a while before collapsing on the ground.]

Verse no. 50:

**सा बाणवर्षिणम् रामम् योधयित्वा सुरदिवषाम्।
अप्रबोधाय सुष्वाप गृध्रच्छाये वरूथिनी॥ १२-५०**

sā bāṇavarṣiṇam rāmam yodhayitvā suradviṣām|
aprabodhāya suṣvāpa gṛdhracchāye varūthinī || 12-50

12-50. By the shower of Lord Ram's invincible arrows, the army of demons who had terrified the gods was made to sleep eternally under the shadow of wings of vultures (who descended in hordes to feast on the corpses).

[Note--Just like a dead person is laid to rest under some kind of shade, the dead demons were shaded by the wings of vultures who swooped down upon them from the sky.]

Verse no. 51:

**राघवास्त्रविदीर्णानाम् रावणम् प्रति रक्षसाम्।
तेषाम् शूर्पणखैवैका दुष्प्रवृत्तिहराऽभवत्॥ १२-५१**

rāghavāstravidīrṇānām rāvaṇam prati rakṣasām|
teṣām śūrpaṇakhaivaikā duṣpravṛttiharā'bhavat || 12-51

12-51. Only Supernakha was left behind to convey to Ravana, the king of the demon race, the news of the death of these demons by the arrows of Lord Ram (because all the others were dead).

Verse no. 52:

निग्रहात्स्वसुराप्तानाम् वधाच्च धनदानुजः।
रामेण निहितम् मेने पदम् दशसु मूर्धसु॥ १२-५२

nigrahātsvasurāptānām vadhācca dhanadānujaḥ|
rāmeṇa nihitam mene padam daśasu mūrdhasu || 12-52

12-52. When Ravana heard of the insult inflicted upon his sister Supernakha and the slaying of his trusted lieutenants and kinsmen (Khar, Dushan and Trishira), he felt extremely annoyed and agitated as if Lord Ram had symbolically put his foot on his ten heads to humiliate him and trample upon his honour.

[Note--Ravana treated this development as a direct challenge to his authority and power. He was not accustomed to such a thing, so this news infuriated him and rubbed his ego and pride the wrong way.]

Verse no. 53:

रक्षसा मृगरूपेण वञ्चयित्वा स राघवौ।
जहार सीताम् पक्षीन्द्रप्रयासक्षणविघ्नितः॥ १२-५३

rakṣasā mrgarūpeṇa vañcayitvā sa rāghavau|
jahāra sītām pakṣīन्द्रprayaśakṣaṇavighnitaḥ || 12-53

12-53. Deciding to take revenge, Ravana compelled the demon Marich to assume the form of a golden deer (i.e. a deer with a golden skin). Using this as a bait, he deceived the two brothers of the lineage of ancient king Raghu (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) to steal Sita and take her away (to his capital at Lanka)¹. On the way, he was intercepted by the vulture king named Jatayu who tried to save Sita and had briefly fought with Ravana for this purpose, but the poor bird did not succeed (because the demon cut-off his wings, felling him on the ground)².

[Note--¹This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23-to Doha no. 28.

²This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-22 that precede Doha no. 229.]

Verse no. 54:

तौ सीतावेषिणौ गृध्रम् लूनपक्षमपश्यताम्।
प्राणैर्दशरथप्रीतेरनुणम् कण्ठवर्तिभिः॥ १२-५४

tau sītāveṣiṇau grdhram lūnapakṣamapaśyatām|
prāṇairdaśarathapṛīteranṛṇam kaṇṭhavartibhiḥ || 12-54

12-54. When Lord Ram and Laxman began their search for Sita and moved around in the forest, they came to a place where they saw the old vulture Jatayu lying wounded on the ground. His wings had been cut-off and his last breath was stuck in his throat.

Lord Ram recognised him to be a friend of his father king Dashrath. By dying in his attempt to save Sita from being abducted by Ravana, Jatayu had discharged the debt of friendship to his friend Dashrath¹.

[Note--¹ Let us briefly read the few stories that are associated with the friendship between king Dashrath, the father of Lord Ram, and Jatayu, the vulture.

One such is narrated in Aagneya Ramayana. It says that at the time of Dashrath's marriage with his eldest wife Kaushalya, Ravana, the king of demons, got the wind of it and became irked. He created obstacles in the path of the groom's party while it was on its way from Ayodhya to the kingdom where Kaushalya lived. Ravana caused a flood to occur in the river that the groom's party was crossing on boats. The particular boat that Dashrath rode broke, and he was left adrift on the water. But somehow he managed to save his life by reaching an island. Sage Vashistha too was with king Dashrath at this time. The auspicious time fixed for the marriage ceremony was very near, and the two, Dashrath and Vashistha, marooned in a remote island, were worried as to how they would reach the venue in time. It was on this occasion that Jatayu had helped them by giving them a lift on his back and ferried them to their destination. This is believed to be the reason why Dashrath and Jatayu became life-long friends.

In another Ramayana known as the 'Bhavartha Ramayana', there is a story that king Dashrath had gone to help Indra, the king of gods, to fight a demon named Namuchi. During the fierce battle, Jatayu had attacked Namuchi and felled the armour that the demon wore on his head as a protective shield. Seizing the moment, Dashrath had severed the demon's head. Since that time, the two, Jatayu and Dashrath, became fast friends and comrade-in-arms.

Another reason for their brotherhood was that sage Kashyap was the grandfather of Jatayu, the king of vultures, and king Manu, who later on took birth as king Dashrath—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123.

Jatayu and Dashrath were contemporaries, and both lived for 60 thousand years—apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 50, verse no. 20.]

Verse no. 55:

स रावणहृताम् ताभ्याम् वचसाचष्ट मैथिलीम्।
आत्मनः सुमहत्कर्म व्रणैरावेद्य संस्थितः॥ १२-५५

sa rāvaṇahr̥tām tābhyām vacasācaṣṭa maithilīm|
ātmanah̥ sumahatkarma vraṇairāvedya saṁsthitaḥ || 12-55

12-55. Jatau informed Lord Ram and Laxman that Sita had been abducted by Ravana¹. A glance at his wounds showed the two brothers how valiantly he had fought with Ravana in order to save Sita. But soon the bird died (and went to heaven).

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 31.]

Verse no. 56:

तयोस्तस्मिन्नवीभूतपितृव्यापतिशोकयोः।

पितरीवाग्निसंस्कारात्परा ववृतिरे क्रियाः॥ १२-५६

tayostasminnavībhūtapitr̥vyāpatiśokayoh|
pitarīvāgnisaṁskārātparā vavṛtire kriyāḥ || 12-56

12-56. Jatau could speak no more, and died soon thereafter (but not before informing the two brothers about Ravana abducting Sita and taking her in the southern direction¹).

Jatau's death made Lord Ram and Laxman as sad and dismayed as they had been when they learnt of the death of their father, king Dashrath. The grieving brothers performed all the funeral rites and cremated Jatau with all respect as if they were conducting the funeral and cremation rituals of their own father².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32.]

Verse no. 57:

वधनिर्धूतशापस्य कबन्धस्योपदेशतः।

मुमूर्च्छ सख्यम् रामस्य समानव्यसने हरौ॥ १२-५७

vadhanirdhūtaśāpasya kabandhasyopadeśataḥ|
mumūrccha sakhyam rāmasya samānavyasane harau || 12-57

12-57. Proceeding ahead from that place, Lord Ram and Laxman encountered a demon named Kabandha. He had become a demon due to a sage's curse. Lord Ram cut-off his limbs, thereby freeing him from the curse. Kabandha then reverted to his earlier form which resembled a demi-god¹.

Kabandha was mighty pleased to have found liberation from the curse, and so in order to express his thanks and gratitude to Lord Ram, he told the Lord about Sugriv and how he lives in exile because his elder brother Baali had snatched his wife as well as his share of the kingdom of Kishkindha.

Lord Ram, who himself was suffering a similar trauma of having his wife Sita being forcibly taken away from him, instantly developed sympathy for Sugriv and empathised with his condition as the Lord found a common ground of grievance

between his own condition and that of Sugriv (as both had their wives forcibly snatched from them).

Therefore, Lord Ram established friendship with Sugriv and developed a rapport with him².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 33. It was sage Durbasa who had cursed him.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 1, and Doha no. 4.

Sugriv had promised Lord Ram that he would do whatever can to find and retrieve Sita (refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 5), and the Lord reciprocated by promising his friend Sugriv that he would restore the latter's honour by eliminating his arch rival Baali (refer: Doha no. 6 along with Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that follow it).]

Verse no. 58:

स हत्वा वालिनम् वीरस्तत्पदे चिरकाङ्क्षिते।

धातोः स्थान इवादेशम् सुग्रीवम् संन्यवेशयत्॥ १२-५८

sa hatvā vālinam vīrastatpade cirakāṅkṣite|

dhātoḥ sthāna ivādeśam sugrīvam saṁnyaveśayat || 12-58

12-58. The warrior Lord Ram killed Baali and restored the hereditary right to the throne of the kingdom (of Kishkindha) to Sugriv, thereby setting right a grave mistake that Baali had made (by disinherit his brother from his right to the share of the kingdom). It was like the case of a linguistic expert setting right an error of grammar or word composition by inserting a replacement in the form of a syllable, letter or word as a substitute to rectify that error, without changing the overall meaning.

Verse no. 59:

इतस्ततश्च वैदेहीमन्वेष्टुम् भर्तृचोदिताः।

कपयश्चेरुरार्तस्य रामस्येव मनोरथाः॥ १२-५९

itastataśca vaidehīmanveṣṭum bharṭṛcoditāḥ|

kapayaścerurārtasya rāmasyeva manorathāḥ || 12-59

12-59. Upon receiving instructions from Sugriv, large number of monkey and bears went in all the directions in search of Sita¹ just like Lord Ram had himself wandered in the forest to search for her earlier, and his mind still wandered here and there contemplating on the many possibilities of her being present somewhere.

[Note--¹To fulfil his promise to Lord Ram that he will do his best to find Sita and restore her to the Lord, Sugriv, now with the resources of the kingdom at his disposal, sent messengers in all the directions to find the whereabouts of Sita. His messengers spread in all the directions, looking into every nook and corner of the country to get a

hint of her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 22.]

Verse no. 60:

**प्रवृत्तावुपलब्धायाम् तस्याः संपातिदर्शनात्।
मारुतिः सागरम् तीर्णः संसारमिव निर्ममः॥ १२-६०**

pravṛttāvupalabdhāyām tasyāḥ saṁpātidarśanāt|
mārutiḥ sāgaram tīrṇaḥ saṁsāramiva nirmamaḥ || 12-60

12-60. While undertaking this massive exercise, one group met Sampati, the brother of the vulture Jatau. Sampati told the group that it was the demon king Ravana who has taken Sita away and he has held her captive in his capital of Lanka on the other shore of the ocean. When the monkeys and bears heard this, they unanimously decided to send Hanuman on the mission to meet Sita and come back with her news¹. Then, Hanuman leapt across the width of the ocean² in the same way as a person who has renounced the charm of the material world and has developed detachment from it is able to easily cross over the symbolic ocean of transmigration, representing the endless cycle of birth and death, to find salvation, emancipation, deliverance, eternal rest and peace for his soul (which is called 'Moksha').

[Note--¹This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, from Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27-to Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.

²Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.

A very significant observation can be made here. Hanuman faced many hurdles while crossing the ocean to Lanka, but he overcame them easily. Similarly, a man may face many obstacles in his pursuit of Moksha and spiritual bliss, but if he remains steady and has truly developed renunciation, dispassion and detachment then no charm, no allurements of the material world would be strong enough to be able to trap him in its tentacles. Hanuman was devoted to accomplish his task of finding Sita, and everything else simply mattered nothing to him.]

Verse no. 61:

**दृष्टा विचिन्वता तेन लङ्कायाम् राक्षसीवृता।
जानकी विषवल्लीभिः परितेव महौषधिः॥ १२-६१**

drṣṭā vicinvatā tena laṅkāyām rākṣasīvṛtā|
jānakī viṣavallībhiḥ pariteva mahauṣadhiḥ || 12-61

12-61. While searching for Sita in Lanka, Hanuman saw her sitting silently at a place. She was surrounded on all the sides by fearful-looking female demons, yet her inherent aura of glory, holiness and piety weren't diminished, but shone through. The sight reminded one of a powerful herb known as 'Sanjivani' whose life-restoring and

rejuvenating qualities remain unaffected even if it is surrounded by poisonous creepers.

[Note--Here, Sita is likened to the Sanjivani, while the demoness to the poisonous creepers.]

Verse no. 62:

तस्यै भर्तुरभिज्ञानमङ्गुलीयम् ददौ कपिः।
प्रत्युद्गतमिवानुष्णैस्तदानन्दाश्रुबिन्दुभिः॥ १२-६२

tasyai bharturabhijñānamaṅgulīyam dadau kapiḥ|
pratyudgatamivānuṣṇaistadānandāśrubindubhiḥ || 12-62

12-62. Hanuman went to her and gave her the finger-ring that Lord Ram had given to Hanuman earlier as a token of identification¹. Sita received it with tears of joy in her eyes that seemed cool to symbolise her great relief.

[Note--¹At the time of departure from Kishkindha, Lord Ram summoned Hanuman and gave him his finger-ring to be carried to Sita as a token to identify himself. This ring convinced Sita that Hanuman was indeed a messenger from the Lord, and not some cunning demon out to deceive her at the behest of Ravana.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23; and (b) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 12-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 14.]

Verse no. 63:

निर्वाप्य प्रियसंदेशैः सीतामक्षवधोद्धतः।
स ददाह पुरीम् लङ्काम् क्षणसोढारिनिग्रहः॥ १२-६३

nirvāpya priyasamdeśaiḥ sītāmakṣavadhoddhataḥ|
sa dadāha purīm laṅkāṁ kṣaṇasoḍhārinigrahaḥ || 12-63

12-63. Hanuman first comforted Sita by conveying to her Lord Ram's pleasant message of reassurance to her, then he confronted the demons and killed Akshaya Kumar (the son of Ravana) who had been sent by the demon chief to catch the intruder and bring him to his court. Thereafter, for a little while he allowed himself to be held captive by the demons, and then vented his ire on the demons by burning their city of Lanka.

[Note--This entire episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 20; and (ii) Doha no. 24-to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 26.

It so happened that Hanuman felt very hungry and began eating fruits in the royal garden of Ravana. In the process, he ruined the garden. When Ravana was informed by demon guards, he sent his son Akshaya Kumar to tackle the mysterious intruder who had the temerity to run amok in his favourite palace garden. In the

confrontation that followed, Hanuman slayed the prince. Stung, Ravana sent his other son Meghanad to capture Hanuman. Meghanad used a weapon known as 'Brahmastra', i.e. a weapon that cannot fail to accomplish its task. Hanuman decided to yield to it so as to protect its glory and powers. He was thus tied and taken to the court of Ravana. An angry and acrimonious verbal duel took place between Hanuman and Ravana, which so much infuriated the demon king that he ordered that Hanuman's tail be set on fire so that he goes back to his Lord with a deformed body that would be reminiscent of the deformation of Supernakha by Lord Ram, and a befitting retribution for her insult. For this purpose, layers of oil-soaked cloth were wrapped around Hanuman's tail and then set on fire. But Ravana had miscalculated Hanuman's abilities, as the latter immediately freed himself, and by jumping from building to building and dragging the long tube of burning cloth behind him, he set the whole city ablaze. Then he jumped into the ocean to douse the flames, returned to take leave from Sita, and then returned home to meet Lord Ram in Kishkindha.]

Verse no. 64:

**प्रत्यभिज्ञानरत्नम् च रामायदर्शयत्कृती।
हृदयम् स्वयमायातम् वैदेह्या इव मूर्तिमत्॥ १२-६४**

pratyabhijñānaratnam ca rāmāyādarśayatkr̥tī|
hr̥dayam svayamāyātam vaidehyā iva mūrtimat || 12-64

12-64. Overwhelmed with joy at the success of his mission, Hanuman asked Sita to give him some kind of token to be taken back to Lord Ram to convince him that he has indeed met her, in the same way as the Lord had given his finger-ring for identification. So Sita gave the jewel she wore in her hairs (a jewelled hair-pin). Hanuman returned to Lord Ram and showed him this piece of evidence of his meeting with Sita. The Lord heartily welcomed him and embraced the jewel sent by Sita to his heart, treating it as a symbolic presence of Sita in a physical form.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

Verse no. 65:

**स प्राप हृदयन्यस्तमणिस्पर्शनिमीलितः।
अपयोधरसंसर्गाम् प्रियालिङ्गननिर्वृतिम्॥ १२-६५**

sa prāpa hr̥dayanyastamanisparśanimīlitaḥ|
apayodharasamsargām priyāliṅgananirvṛtim || 12-65

12-65. Lord Ram placed the jewelled hair-pin of Sita close to his heart and closed his eyes to indicate that he has become very emotional as if he is virtually enjoying embracing her in a symbolic way.

Verse no. 66:

श्रुत्वा रामः प्रियोदन्तम् मेने तत्सङ्गमोत्सुकः।
महार्णवपरिक्षेपम् लङ्कायाः परिखालघुम्॥ १२-६६

śrutvā rāmaḥ priyodantam mene tatsaṅgamotsukah|
mahārṇavaparikṣepam laṅkāyāḥ parikhālaghum || 12-66

12-66. After hearing the news of Sita, Lord Ram became very eager to meet her at the shortest possible time. This eagerness was so profound that the vast ocean that formed a broad and deep moat around the fort of Lanka seemed nothing but a small and shallow trough or drain to him, something that could be easily stepped across in order to reach her.

Verse no. 67:

स प्रतस्थेऽरिनाशाय हरिसैन्यैरनुद्रुतः।
न केवलम् भुवः पृष्ठे व्योम्नि संबाधवर्तिभिः॥ १२-६७

sa pratasthe'rināśāya harisainyairanudrutah|
na kevalam bhuvah pṛṣṭhe vyomni sambādhavartibhiḥ || 12-67

12-67. So therefore, Lord Ram marched with a huge army of monkeys and bears with a mission of eliminating the demons (and freeing Sita). His army was so vast that it covered the entire land on earth as well as the sky, creating a scene of a huge doomsday storm sweeping across the land and the firmament to wreck the realm of the demons.

[Note--A huge cloud of dust was kicked up, and there was so much excitement in the rank and file of the Lord's extensive army that soldiers were jostling and pushing forward, and many of them just got onto the shoulders of their friends and joyfully jumped from one shoulder to another as others cheered and prodded them onwards. It was a stampede like situation, but not that would trample anyone underfoot, but that which showed the enthusiasm and vigour of the soldiers.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 68:

निविष्टमुदधेः कूले तम् प्रपाद बिभीषणः।
स्नेहाद्राक्षसलक्ष्म्येव बुद्धिमाविश्य चोदितः॥ १२-६८

niviṣṭamudadheḥ kūle tam prapāda bibhīṣaṇah|
snehādrākṣasalakṣmyeva buddhimāviśya coditah || 12-68

12-68. When Lord Ram camped on the shore of the ocean (to devise a means to cross it), Ravana's brother Vibhishan came to meet and join Lord Ram. It appeared that the deity of the demon race had subtly hinted to him that his welfare lay in surrendering to Lord Ram and seeking his blessings before it is too late.

[Note--This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 41-to Doha no. 49. Vibhishan had tried to make his elder brother, Ravana, see sense and understand the futility of his confrontational attitude towards Lord Ram. But Ravana took it in the wrong light, treated Vibhishan disdainfully as if he was a traitor, and kicked him out of his kingdom. Frustrated Vibhishan immediately left Lanka and came to seek shelter with Lord Ram who welcomed him and accepted him in his camp.]

Verse no. 69:

तस्मै निशाचरैश्वर्यम् प्रतिशुश्राव राघवः।

काले खलु समालब्धाः फलम् बध्नन्ति नीतयः॥ १२-६९

tasmai niśācaraiśvāryam pratiśuśrāva rāghavaḥ |
kāle khalu samālabdhāḥ phalam badhnanti nītayaḥ || 12-69

12-69. At that time, Lord Ram promised Vibhishan that he would make the latter the next king of Lanka¹. In fact, it was a politically prudent move by the Lord at this juncture when the clouds of war were gathering on the horizon as this promise would soon bear fruits for the Lord (because it motivated Vibhishan to help the Lord win the war in Lanka and defeat Ravana by divulging all the secrets of Lanka and its army, as well as ways to overcome the many tricks that the demons led by Ravana and others were sure to employ during the course of the war; in the final hours of the war, it was Vibhishan who told Lord Ram the secret of Ravana's long life, and how to kill him).

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes it.]

Verse no. 70:

स सेतुम् बन्धयामास प्लवगैर्लवणाम्भसि।

रसातलादिवोन्मग्नम् शेषम् स्वप्नाय शार्ङ्गिणः॥ १२-७०

sa setum bandhayāmāsa plavagairlavanāmbhasi |
rasātalādivonmagṇam śeṣam svapnāya śārṅgiṇaḥ || 12-70

12-70. The long bridge of floating stones that Lord Ram got constructed over the surface of the ocean (linking its northern and southern shores) looked as if Seshnath, the celestial serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the Kshir Sagar (i.e. the celestial ocean), has himself arrived to serve his Lord by spreading or uncoiling its long body to cover the distance between the two ends of the ocean so that Lord Ram (who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) could easily go across.

[Note--The construction of the bridge has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2. Its main architects were the two monkey brothers Nala and Neel.

In those ancient times the science of construction of bridges was so advanced that no support was used to keep it floating on the heaving surface of the ocean, and all the pieces of rocks and boulders were glued together as soon as they were brought by monkey warriors from surrounding hills and mountains and dumped on the ocean at the designated site. Only its two ends were anchored to solid ground, one at the northern end and the other at the southern end.

Another wonderment is that these rocks and boulders 'floated' and did not sink in the water, which indicates that they were made of something that had a hard surface but light from within. The third astonishing fact is that all the while Ravana wasn't aware that such a mammoth task is underway right under his nose. What does this later development suggests--it simply points that none of his watchmen had the guts to go and report the matter to him out of fear of inviting his wrath. Another explanation is that Vibhishan had sent quiet messages to the guards that if they cooperated and let the army enter Lanka, then all of them would be spared, and when the throne comes to him he would liberally reward them. The next explanation is that Hanuman had assumed a gigantic form and stood guard over the bridge as its construction progressed. When the frontier guards of Lanka saw him standing threateningly and glaring towards them, they became terrified as they had already witnessed what havoc he could unleash over them if they did not fall in line and obeyed him. And perhaps the last reason is that the fiat of Fate and the dictate of Destiny had made Ravana blind out of haughtiness and arrogance so much that in spite of all the alarming developments of late, he cared for nothing in the false belief of his invincibility and powers.]

Verse no. 71:

तेनोत्तीर्य पथा लङ्काम् रोधयामास पिङ्गलैः।
द्वितीयम् हेमप्राकारम् कुर्वद्भिरिव वानरैः॥ १२-७१

tenottīrya pathā laṅkāṃ rodhayāmāsa piṅgalaiḥ|
dvitīyam hemaprākāraṃ kurvadbhiriva vānaraiḥ || 12-71

12-71. Having constructed the bridge, Lord Ram crossed over to Lanka with his army and laid siege of the city by ordering his monkey warriors to surround it from all sides. The monkeys had body hairs with a brownish hue, and when they encircled the city in a tight formation it looked that another fort with golden ramparts had been erected around Lanka. This second ring was in addition to the original fort with its gold-plated walls, ramparts, turrets and watch-towers.

Verse no. 72:

रणः प्रववृते तत्र भीमः प्लवग रक्षसाम्।
दिग्विजृम्भितकाकुत्स्थपौलस्त्यजयघोषणः॥ १२-७२

raṇaḥ pravavṛte tatra bhīmaḥ plavaga rakṣasām|
digvijṛmbhitakākutsthapaulastyajayaghoṣaṇaḥ || 12-72

12-72. Such a fierce and no-holds-barred tumultuous war erupted in Lanka between the demons and monkeys that their war-cries, rants and yells rang out in the sky with such high pitch that it reverberated and echoed in all the four directions of the globe.

[Note--The monkey army hailed Lord Ram and cried 'victory to Lord Ram', and likewise the demon soldiers hailed Ravana and yelled a counter slogan by shouting 'victory to Ravana'.]

Verse no. 73:

पादपाविद्धपरिघः शिलानिष्पिष्टमुद्गरः।

अतिशस्त्रनखन्यासः शैलरुग्णमतंगजः॥ १२-७३

pādapāviddhaparighaḥ śilāniṣpiṣṭamudgaraḥ |
atiśastranakhanyāsaḥ śailarugṇamataṅgajaḥ || 12-73

12-73. In the battle that ensued, the valiant monkey warriors used large tree-trunks to bash the demon soldiers and smashed the iron clubs (Parigha) which the enemy held. They rained heavy rocks on the enemy soldiers and pulverised their battle-hammers or battering-rams (Mudgar--also technically known as mallets) to smithereens. The ferocious monkeys used their long, pointed and sharp nails to gouge the flesh out of the demon enemy and inflicted such grave and deep wounds on their bodies that no physical weapon would have been able to inflict. The monkeys further bludgeoned war elephants by smashing huge rocks on their heads which left the poor animals reeling and running helter-skelter.

Verse no. 74:

अथ रामशिरश्छेददर्शनोद्भ्रान्तचेतनाम्।

सीताम् मायेति शंसन्ती त्रिजटा समजीवयत्॥ १२-७४

atha rāmaśiraśchedadarśanodbhrāntacetanām |
sītām māyeti śaṁsantī trijaṭā samajīvayat || 12-74

12-74. In the meanwhile, one demon (named Vidhyu-Jihava), who was skilled in creating illusions and false images, crafted a severed head resembling that of Lord Ram and threw it in front of Sita. When she saw it, Sita fainted out of shock and was plunged in grief. At that time, a demoness named Trijata, who was her constant companion during the days of her captivity and who was faithful to her, reassured Sita that this was a cunning ploy by the demons to deceive and tease her, and it was merely a delusion, and there was no truth in it.

Verse no. 75:

कामम् जीवति मे नाथ इति सा विजहौ शुचम्।

प्राङ्मत्वा सत्यमस्यान्तम् जीवितास्मीति लज्जिता॥ १२-७५

kāmam jīvati me nātha iti sā vijahau śucam|
prāṇmatvā satyamasyāntam jīvitāsmīti lajjitā || 12-75

12-75. Although Sita recovered from her shock and grief because her beloved husband, Lord Ram, was still alive, but she had other regrets--she lamented that why had she not died as soon as she saw the severed head of her beloved husband because before Trijata told her the truth she had believed that the severed head belonged to Lord Ram.

[Note--The lesson one learns from this incident is that it is not wise to act in haste and allow one's wisdom to be overcome by spur-of-the-moment emotional impulses without patiently checking facts of the case.]

Verse no. 76:

गरुडापातविश्लिष्टमेघनादास्त्रबन्धनः।

दाशरथ्योः क्षणक्लेशः स्वप्नवृत्त इवाभवत्॥ १२-७६

garuḍāpātaviśliṣṭameghanādāstrabandhanah|
dāśarathyoḥ kṣaṇakleśaḥ svapnavṛtta ivābhavat || 12-76

12-76. Almost at the same time, Ravana's son named Meghanad tied both Lord Ram and Laxman in a snare called 'Naga-Pasha'. {It is a sort of magical arrow that immediately turns into a serpent and tightly ties up the victim in a firm grip so that the latter is unable to move. In the demon army, only Meghanad knew how to use it.}¹

Immediately, Garud, the heavenly Eagle and the mount of Lord Vishnu, swooped down from the sky and untangled the loop by devouring the coiled serpents.

But this momentary captivity made Lord Ram and Laxman dismayed and they hoped it was merely a bad dream.

[Note--¹This incident of Meghanad ensnaring both the brothers in the Naag-Pash has been narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Lanka (or Yuddha) Kand, at the following places: (i) Canto 44, verse nos. 35-38; (ii) Canto 45, verse no. 28; (iii) Canto 49, verse nos. 1-3; and (iv) Canto 50, verse nos. 34-37.

However, Ram Charit Manas mentions that Meghanad tied only Lord Ram in the serpent-rope: Refer-- Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 73; and (ii) Doha no. 74 along with Chaupai line nos. 10 that precedes it. No mention is made of Laxman too being tied.]

Verse no. 77:

ततो बिभेद पौलस्त्यः शक्त्या वक्षसि लक्ष्मणम्।

रामस्त्वनाहतोऽप्यासीद्विदीर्णहृदयः शुचा॥ १२-७७

tato bibheda paulastyah śaktyā vakṣasi lakṣmaṇam|
rāmastvanāhato'pyāsīdvidīrṇahṛdayaḥ śucā || 12-77

12-77. When Meghanad, the son of Ravana who was born in the family of sage Pulastya, saw that the two brothers have been freed from the serpent-snare he had tied them with, he became furious, and shot a powerful and energised arrow called 'Shakti' at Laxman. This arrow was infallible and as it slammed into Laxman, the latter collapsed on the ground by its impact. Though Lord Ram was not directly hit by this weapon, but when he saw Laxman lying on the ground, his heart virtually ruptured in grief and lamentation.

[Note--This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 54.]

Verse no. 78:

स मारुतिसमानीतमहौषधिहतव्यथः।

लङ्कास्त्रीणाम् पुनश्चक्रे विलापाचार्यकम् शरैः॥ १२-७८

sa mārutisamānītamahauṣadhihatavyathah |
laṅkāstrīṇām punaścakre vilāpācāryakam śaraiḥ || 12-78

12-78. Hanuman immediately went to a remote mountain in the north and brought the life-restoring herb known as 'Sanjivani Buti'. As soon as it was administered to Laxman, he regained his consciousness and all his sufferings vanished¹.

Laxman got up and showered a ferocious volley of powerful arrows that wiped out a large number of demon warriors, making their women wail and lament loudly.

[Note--¹This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

Verse no. 79:

स नादम् मेघनादस्य धनुश्चेन्द्रायुधप्रभम्।

मेघस्येव शरत्कालो न किञ्चित्पर्यशेषयत्॥ १२-७९

sa nādam meghanādasya dhanuścendrāyudhaprabham |
meghasyeva śaratkālo na kiñcitparyaśeṣayat || 12-79

12-79. Just as the autumn season causes the rain-bearing clouds to recede and stop their rumbling, and with the clouds the rain-bow too disappears, so likewise Laxman viciously hit Meghanad and reduced his bow to splinters. {To wit, Laxman finally killed Meghanad.}

[Note--Death of Meghanad has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-16 that precede Doha no. 76.]

Verse no. 80:

कुम्भकर्णः कपीन्द्रेण तुल्यावस्थः स्वसुः कृतः।
रुरोध रामम् शृङ्गीव टङ्कच्छिन्नमनःशिलः॥ १२-८०

kumbhakarnaḥ kapīndreṇa tulyāvasthaḥ svasuḥ kṛtaḥ|
rurodha rāmam śṛṅgīva ṭaṅkacchinmananaḥśilāḥ || 12-80

12-80. Meanwhile, Sugriv, the king of the monkeys, chopped off the nose of Kumbhakarna (the brother of Ravana), making the latter resemble Supernakha whose ears and nose had been cut-off earlier by Laxman in Panchavati. With streams of blood gushing out from his cavernous face, Kumbhakarna looked very hideous. He stood before Lord Ram and blocked his way as if a huge rock had been struck off the cliff-face of a huge mountain and had fallen down on the ground to block the Lord's way, with a stream of dirty red water gushing out from the side where the rock had been struck with a large axe.

Verse no. 81:

अकाले बोधितो भ्राता प्रियस्वप्नो वृथा भवान्।
रामेषुभिरितीवासौ दीर्घनिद्राम् प्रवेशितः॥ १२-८१

akāle bodhito bhrātā priyasvapno vṛthā bhavān|
rāmeṣubhiritivāsau dīrghanidrām praveśitaḥ || 12-81

12-81. The arrows of Lord Ram made him fall to the ground and lie prostrate as if the Lord had granted him his favourite pastime of deep slumber. It appeared that the Lord was telling him that "you love sleeping a lot and your brother Ravana had unnecessarily disturbed you by waking you up; so go to sleep eternally now, when no one would wake you up in future."

[Note--The death of Kumbhakarna is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 71.]

Verse no. 82:

इतराण्यपि रक्षांसि पेतुर्वानरकोटिषु।
रजांसि समरोत्थानि तच्छोणितनदीष्विव॥ १२-८२

itarāṇyapi rakṣāṁsi peturvānarakoṭiṣu|
rajāṁsi samarotthāni tacchoṇitanadīṣviva || 12-82

12-82. Countless demon warriors continued to fall dead on the battle-field teeming with monkey warriors, and the blood flowing from the wounded and dead soldiers formed a river of thick red liquid whose surface had become muddy with the dust and the grime raised from the battle-field.

Verse no. 83:

निर्ययावथ पौलस्त्यः पुनर्युद्धाय मन्दिरात्।
अरावणमरामम् वा जगददयेति निश्चितः॥ १२-८३

niryayāvatha paulastyah punaryuddhāya mandirāt|
arāvaṇamarāmam vā jagadadyeti niścitaḥ || 12-83

12-83. Finally, Ravana came out on the battle-field from his palace, with a firm resolve that today either he would live or Lord Ram would live in this world.

{Ravana decided to fight to the end, with a firm determination that by the end of the battle, either he would die or Lord Ram would die. He decided that there would be no compromise and no limits would be observed in the combat. It was a final call for a do-or-die for him. With almost his entire clan having been wiped out by now, there was nothing more for Ravana to lose.}

Verse no. 84:

रामम् पदातिमालोक्य लङ्केशम् च वरूथिनम्।
हरियुग्यम् रथम् तस्मै प्रजिघाय पुरंदरः॥ १२-८४

rāmam padātimālokya laṅkeśam ca varūthinam|
hariyugyam ratham tasmai prajighāya puraṁdaraḥ || 12-84

12-84. When Indra (the king of heaven) observed that Ravana was riding a chariot while Lord Ram was on foot, he sent his own chariot which had horses with golden hides.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 89.]

Verse no. 85:

तमाधूतध्वजपटम् व्योमगङ्गोर्मिवायुभिः।
देवसूतभुजालम्बी जैत्रमध्यास्त राघवः॥ १२-८५

tamādhūtadhvajapaṭam vyomagaṅgormivāyubhiḥ|
devasūtabhujālambī jaitramadhyāsta rāghavaḥ || 12-85

12-85. That celestial chariot's banners fluttered with the breeze of the upper reaches of the firmament, and its charioteer named Matali held Lord Ram by the hand and made him board it.

{Since it was no ordinary chariot but the one belonging the gods, it was high as the sky, and its flags and banners almost touched the sky. This chariot was always victorious in all the many campaigns that Indra had undertaken against the demons earlier.}

Verse no. 86:

मातलिस्तस्य माहेन्द्रमामुमोच तनुच्छदम्।
यत्रोत्पलदलकलैब्यमस्त्राण्यापुः सुरदिवषाम्॥ १२-८६

mātalistasya māhendramāmumoca tanucchadam|
yatrotpaladalaklaibyamastrāṇyāpuḥ suradviṣām || 12-86

12-86. Lord Ram put on the body-covering armour that Matali (the charioteer) gave him. This armour was such that no kind of weapon of the demons would have any effect on it, and any arrow or other kind of weapon that the demons would likely use against the Lord would have the effect of a soft lotus flower striking against it.

{This armour ensured that no injury would come to Lord Ram henceforth. It was crucial at this juncture because Ravana would certainly use the most potent of weapons he had in his arsenal to somehow subdue the Lord. Earlier in the war, Lord Ram and Laxman had been seriously injured a lot many times, but after riding this chariot and wearing the armour sent by Indra, Lord Ram did not suffer any such injury during the last phases of the war.}

Verse no. 87:

अन्योन्यदर्शनप्राप्तविक्रमावसरम् चिरात्।
रामरावणयोर्युद्धम् चरितार्थमिवाभवत्॥ १२-८७

anyonyadarśanaprāptavikramāvasaram cirāt|
rāmarāvaṇayoryuddham caritārthamivābhavat || 12-87

12-87. Lord Ram and Ravana came face-to-face after a long time¹. So therefore, both got a chance to show-case their valour, courage, power and strength in a face-to-face combat. It appeared that it was the day when two mighty warriors had given the deity of war its glory and fame.

{Both Lord Ram and Ravana employed the best of skills that they possessed in the art of warfare, using weapons and manoeuvres expertly. The deity of war smiled and cheered both of them.}

[Note--¹When was the first time that Lord Ram had had a glimpse of Ravana? Prior to the start of the war, Ravana had gone to a viewing gallery on the citadel of his fort to watch some musical and dance programme. Lord Ram wandered where this music was coming from. At that time, Vibhishan had told the Lord that Ravana had the habit of enjoying music and dance at a gallery facing the ocean. Then, as if to challenge Ravana, Lord Ram had shot an arrow that fell the demon chief's ceremonial royal umbrella, crown and other paraphernalia of royalty. This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 10; and Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 88:

भुजमूर्धोरुबाहुल्यादेकोऽपि धनदानुजः।
ददशे हययथापूर्वो मातृवंश इव स्थितः॥ १२-८८

bhujamūrdhorubāhulyādeko'pi dhanadānujaḥ|
dadṛśe hyayathāpūrvo mātṛvaṁśa iva sthitaḥ || 12-88

12-88. Since the majority of the demon soldiers had been killed in the war, Ravana was alone in the battle-field. But with his huge ten heads, necks and shoulders, as well as ten pairs of hands he gave the impression that he was not alone but accompanied by many ferocious demons.

Verse no. 89:

जेतारम् लोकपालानाम् स्वमुखैरर्चितेश्वरम्।
रामस्तुलितकैलासमारातिम् बहवमन्यत॥ १२-८९

jetāram lokapālānām svamukhairarciteśvaram|
rāmastulitakailāsamārātim bahvamanyata || 12-89

12-89. When Lord Ram saw Ravana who had vanquished Indra and many other custodians of the four corners of the world, who had offered his own heads as sacrifice to Lord Shiva, and who had lifted Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva) on the tip of his finger¹, the Lord thought that today he had a befitting opponent before him, one whose valour, strength, powers and abilities were unmatched in this world.

[Note--¹Ravana's remarkable achievements have been listed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 22; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 25; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5, 8 that precede Doha no. 28.]

Verse no. 90:

तस्य स्फुरति पौलस्त्यः सीतासंगमशंसिनि।
निचखानाधिकक्रोधः शरम् सव्येतरे भुजे॥ १२-९०

tasya sphurati paulastyah sītāsaṅgamaśamsini|
nicakhānādhikakrodhaḥ śaram savyetare bhuje || 12-90

12-90. Infuriated Ravana shot an arrow on the right arm of Lord Ram which was throbbing subtly as a good omen to the Lord that much time was not left before he would be united with Sita.

[Note--Ravana was an expert in such signals and omens. So he decided to demoralise Lord Ram by hitting him on his right arm, thinking that the Lord would take it as a bad omen.]

Verse no. 91:

रावणस्यापि रामास्तो भित्त्वा हृदयमाशुगः।
विवेश भुवमाख्यातुमुरगेभ्य इव प्रियम्॥ १२-९१

rāvaṇasyāpi rāmāsto bhittvā hṛdayamāsugah|
viveśa bhuvamākhyātumuragebhya iva priyam || 12-91

12-91. The final arrow that Lord Ram shot at Ravana bored a hole in his body, pierced his heart, and exited from the opposite side to enter the earth, as if it has gone to the subterranean world to inform the naagas (the serpents living in the lower world or the netherworld which is, according to mythology, the abode of the dead under the surface of the earth) about Ravana's death.

[Note--According to standard versions of the Ramayana, the combat between Ravana and Lord Ram lasted for 7days, ending on the tenth day of the bright half of the lunar month. The day of Ravana's death is commemorated as 'dusshera'. However, Kalidas has summarised the entire battle in verse no. 87-101 in his inimitable style of employing similies and analogies to drive home the point of each verse.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 103.]

Verse no. 92:

**वचसैव तयोर्वाक्यमस्त्रमस्त्रेण निघ्नतोः।
अन्योन्यजयसंरम्भो ववृधे वादिनोरिव॥ १२-९२**

vacasaiva tayorvākyamastramastreṇa nighnatoh|
anyonyaajayasaṁrambho vavṛdhe vādinoriva || 12-92

12-92. Just as two adversaries use words to vehemently argue with and counter each other, and in the process also become angry and shout at each other till the time one is able to defeat his opponent, so likewise the two challengers, Lord Ram and Ravana, used all sorts of weapons at their disposal to strike at the opponent in their bid to defeat the latter, becoming angry and wrathful in the process till the end when the result was finally out--with Lord Ram emerging victorious, and Ravana defeated and dead.

[Note--It was not a civil debate between two scholars or a courtroom where lawyers argue on behalf of their clients, but it was a battle-field and a ferocious war was raging. In this scenario, the adversaries were combatants locked in a the middle of a do-or-die ferocious battle, where no formalities and etiquettes of civil society are observed.

So one can well imagine how terrifying the duel might have been, and why no limits of aggression and use of the most powerful weapons were observed. The aim was to win the war, and not show courtesies of a king's court or the etiquettes of a noble-man's drawing room.]

Verse no. 93:

**विक्रमव्यतिहारेण सामान्याऽभूद्द्वयोरपि।
जयश्रीरन्तरा वेदिर्मत्तवारणयोरिव॥ १२-९३**

vikramavyatihāreṇa sāmānyā'bhūddvayorapi|
jayaśrīrantarā vedirmattavāraṇayoriva || 12-93

12-93. At one point of time Lord Ram would have an upper hand by the display of his unmatched valour and skills, while at the other time it was the turn of Ravana to push back at the Lord by using his own legendary abilities. The result was that the 'deity of victory' could not decide whom to favour, and it kept on switching sides according to the reality on the ground. It was like the case of a combat between two muscular male elephants in a state of rut, when both clash with each other vigorously, and every moment the situation changes so that no is able to predict which of the two combatants would finally win.

Verse no. 94:

कृतप्रतिकृतप्रीतैस्तयोर्मुक्ताम् सुरासुरैः।
परस्परशरव्राताः पुष्पवृष्टिम् न सेहिरे॥ १२-९४

kṛtapratikṛtaprītaistayormuktām surāsuraiḥ|
parasparaśaravrātāḥ puṣpavrṣṭim na sehire || 12-94

12-94. When Lord Ram shot arrows at Ravana or fended off the latter's arrows, then the gods showered flowers on the Lord. In the next moment, when Ravana shot arrows at Lord Ram and deflected the Lord's arrows streaking towards him, then the gods would shower flowers on Ravana. The situation changed so rapidly, and the arrows flew in both the directions so thick and fast that the flowers showered by the gods had no time to fall on either of the two combatants and reach the ground, as they were cut to pieces mid-air and scattered all around (to give the impression that the gods were applauding both the warriors, and showering flower-petals on all the other great warriors who participated in this rare war to praise them all for their valour, courage, dare-devilry and martial skills).

Verse no. 95:

अयःशङ्कुचिताम् रक्षः शतघ्नीमथ शत्रवे।
हताम् वैवस्वतस्येव कूटशाल्मलिमक्षिपत्॥ १२-९५

ayaḥśaṅkucitām rakṣaḥ śataghñīmatha śatrave|
hṛtām vaivasvatasyeva kūṭaśālmalimakṣipat || 12-95

12-95. Then Ravana violently hurled at his enemy (Lord Ram) a mace with an intention to kill the latter. This mace was as strong and fatal as 'Shalmali', the one used by Yam-raja, the patron god of death and hell, and it was studded with spikes made of iron nails that had sharp needle-like ends.

Verse no. 96:

राघवो रथमप्राप्ताम् तामाशाम् च सुरदिवशाम्।
अर्धचन्द्रमुखैर्बाणैश्चिच्छेद कदलीसुखम्॥ १२-९६

rāghavo rathamaprāptām tāmāśām ca suradviṣām|
ardhacandramukhairbāṇaiściccheda kadalīsukham || 12-96

12-96. The demons who were watching the combat were sure that Lord Ram would certainly fall prey to this mace and die. But the Lord sliced off this weapon before it could reach his chariot by using an arrow with a sickle-like or crescent shaped end with as much ease as one would cut off the soft stem of a plantain plant, thereby dashing all the hopes of victory of the demon forces.

Verse no. 97:

अमोघम् संदधे चास्मै धनुष्येकधनुर्धरः।
ब्राह्ममस्त्रम् प्रियाशोकशल्यनिष्कर्षणौषधम्॥ १२-९७

amogham saṁdadhe cāsmāi dhanuṣyekadhanurdharaḥ|
brāhmamastram priyāśokaśalyaniṣkarṣaṇauśadham || 12-97

12-97. The matchless archer Lord Ram mounted an infallible arrow known as 'Brahmastra' on his bow to kill Ravana. This arrow never went in vain. It was like an infallible remedy to remove the cause of all the sorrows of Sita (represented by Ravana).

Verse no. 98:

तद्व्योम्नि शतधा भिन्नम् ददृशे दीप्तिमन्मुखम्।
वपुर्महोरगस्येव करालफलमण्डलम्॥ १२-९८

tadvyomni śatadhā bhinnam dadṛśe dīptimanmukham|
vapurmahoragasyeva karālaphalamaṇḍalam || 12-98

12-98. When shot, that Brahmastra spread out in the sky in the form of countless darts with fiery tips as if the angry celestial serpent known as Seshnath has descended from the heaven, hissing violently, with all its hoods spread out and all its fangs bared.

Verse no. 99:

तेन मन्त्रप्रयुक्तेन निमेषार्धादपातयत्।
स रावणशिरःपङ्क्तिमज्ञातव्रणवेदनाम्॥ १२-९९

tena mantraprayuktena nimeṣārdhādapātayat|
sa rāvaṇaśiraḥpaṅktimajñātavraṇavedanām || 12-99

12-99. Lord Ram had invoked relevant Mantras (mystical formulae) to power this Brahmastra, and it immediately chopped-off all the ten heads of Ravana in half a second so fast that the latter felt no pain and did not suffer the pangs of death.

[Note--Lord Ram has shown the immensity of his grace here. Though Ravana was a cruel demon and had caused immense sufferings to all living beings during his lifetime, but Lord Ram ensured that his last moment was painless and peaceful. Glory to Lord Ram!!

That said, and without prejudice to whatever has been said about the sort of weapon employed by Lord Ram to sever the ten heads of Ravana, let us analyse what the Lord must have surely done from a practical point of view. Ravana had ten heads arranged next to each other in a horizontal plane, with as many necks protruding out from his single trunk. These heads weren't stacked one above the other like a stack of books or flats in an apartment building. Normally a bow is held erect in a vertical position, with one end pointing upwards towards the sky, and the other end towards the ground. The archer grips the bow in the middle, puts an arrow on it so that its rear end touches the bow's string, then pulls the string along with the arrow as much back as he can, and then releases the string. The forward thrust of the released string gives the arrow a push and it flies towards its aimed object with a great velocity.

Now, Ravana had a boon from Lord Shiva that if one of his heads is severed then a new one would immediately spring up to replace it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 25.} So, as soon as Lord Ram would cut-off his head by the conventional method of shooting an arrow aimed at the neck which bore the particular head, the head immediately grew back again. It grew up in a fraction of a second, so by the time the Lord mounted and shot another arrow aimed at the next head, the first one was back on the neck. Lord Ram had tried to kill him by cutting his heads over and over again, but Ravana's form remained intact. Even with one head severed, Ravana's other nine heads remained firmly in place, giving him the needed time to signal his body to replace the lost head. And so therefore, Ravana continued to survive. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 101-b along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.}

Lord Ram was bewildered at this mysterious development. He had to devise a strategy to ensure that all the ten heads of Ravana are severed at one go, simultaneously, so that his trunk becomes headless, and with all the heads gone he would also have lost his data-bank and control-and-command center housed in his ten brains, which in turn would mean that there would be no one in charge to send the required signal to his body's rejuvenating capacity to create new heads to replace the one's that were severed. So the Lord thought over the matter: what should be done?

Soon, the Lord struck on a strategy that was plain and simple--instead of holding the bow erect in a vertical position as is the convention, he turned it into a horizontal position or plane. Now, he quickly placed ten powerful arrows adjacent to each other on it, pulled the string, and released all these ten arrows simultaneously. As a result, obviously, all the ten arrows zoomed forward with equal velocity, side-by-side in a parallel formation. They sliced through Ravana's neck, felling all the ten heads simultaneously, and entered the earth on the opposite side. With all the heads and their respective brains gone, there was no command-and-control center left that would signal Ravana's body to recover, and therefore the trunk collapsed to the ground.

In the context of Ravana having 'ten heads', there is a very interesting thing that is sure to draw one's attention. Ten heads means as many 'brains' or 'minds', i.e.

Ravana had ten brains or ten minds working for him simultaneously, in close coordination with each other much like a super computer. This means that the ability of Ravana to understand and analyse any situation was ten times more and faster than others, and it also translates in practice to imply that he could devise strategies and execute them ten times quicker than his adversary, leaving the latter reeling and dazed. This is the reason why no one could defeat Ravana or out-maneuver him.]

Verse no. 100:

बालार्कप्रतिमेवाप्सु वीचिभिन्ना पतिष्यतः।

राराज रक्षःकायस्य कण्ठच्छेदपरम्परा॥ १२-१००

bālārkapratimevāpsu vīcibhinnā paṭiṣyataḥ|
rarāja rakṣaḥkāyasya kaṇṭhacchedaparamparā || 12-100

12-100. The falling heads of Ravana looked like the rays of the sun being reflected in the ripples formed on the surface of a river.

[Note--Just like the same sun appears to be many in number when its image is reflected in the ripples on the surface of the water in early hours, so likewise the ten heads of Ravana appeared to be countless in numbers when viewed in the background of the turmoil in the battle-field.]

Verse no. 101:

मरुताम् पश्यताम् तस्य शिरांसि पतितान्यपि।

मनो नातिविशस्वास पुनःसंधानशङ्किनाम्॥ १२-१०१

marutām paśyatām tasya śirāṁsi patitānyapi|
mano nātiviśāsvāsa punaḥsamdhānaśaṅkinām || 12-101

12-101. Even after seeing the severed heads of Ravana, the gods could not believe that he had died, because they feared that these heads might join the trunk of Ravana once again, or some new head would spring-up from the place where the heads had been cut-off.

Verse no. 102:

अथ मदगुरुपक्षैलोकपालद्विपाना मनुगतमलिवृन्दैर्गण्डभित्तीर्विहाय।

उपनतमणिबन्धे मूर्ध्नि पौलस्त्यशत्रोः सुरभिः सुरविमुक्तम् पुष्पवर्षम् पपात॥ १२-१०२

atha madagurupakṣailokapāladvipānā
manugatamalivṛndairgaṇḍabhittīrvihāya|
upanatamaṇibandhe mūrdhni paulastyaśatroḥ
surabhi suravimuktam puṣpavarṣam papāta || 12-102

12-102. The gods showered fragrant flowers dripping with sweet nectar on Lord Ram which attracted bees who had wet wings as they had been hitherto engaged in drinking the scented viscous liquid effusing out from the temples of mature elephants belonging to the guardians of the different quarters. The fragrance of the flowers that were showered on Lord Ram was so enchanting and their nectar so sweet that these bees abandoned their earlier engagement with the elephants and came in hordes to form swarms around the head of Lord Ram who was soon to be crowned (as the king of Ayodhya).

Verse no. 103:

यन्ता हरेः सपदि संहतकामुकज्य मापृच्छय राघवमनुष्ठितदेवकार्यम्।
नामाङ्करावणशराङ्कितकेतुयष्टि मूर्ध्वम् रथम् हरिसहस्रयुजम् निनाय॥ १२-१०३

yantā hareḥ sapadi saṁhṛtakārmukajya
māpṛcchya rāghavamanuṣṭhitadevakāryam|
nāmāṅkarāvaṇaśarāṅkitaketuyaṣṭi
mūrdhvam ratham harisahasrayujam nināya || 12-103

12-103. After Ravana's death, Lord Ram loosened the string of his bow, because after having accomplished the work of the gods (which was to eliminate the demons and their king Ravana), there was no need to keep the bow strung and battle-ready.

Indra's charioteer Matali took leave from Lord Ram and went back to heaven with his chariot that had thousands of horses. The flagstaff of that chariot still had the remnants of countless arrows, bearing the insignia of Ravana, stuck on its side.

Verse no. 104:

रघुपतिरपि जातवेदोविशुद्धाम् प्रगृह्य प्रियाम्
प्रियसुहृदि बिभीषणे संगमय्य श्रियम् वैरिणः।
रविसुतसहितेन तेनानुयातः ससौमित्रिणा
भुजविजितविमानरत्नाधिरूढः प्रतस्थे पुरीम्॥ १२-१०४

raghupatirapi jātavedośuddhām pragrhya priyām
priyasuhrdi bibhīṣaṇe saṁgamayya śriyam vairiṇaḥ|
ravisutasahitena tenānuyātaḥ sasaumitriṇā
bhujavijitavimānaratnādhirūḍhaḥ pratasthe purīm || 12-104

12-104. Lord Ram bestowed the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishan who was his friend as well as the younger brother of Ravana¹. {The victorious Lord Ram ensured that the inheritance of the demon kingdom remained within the family of sage Pulastya. Vibhishan was the natural inheritor of the crown as a younger brother of its erstwhile king Ravana. Lord Ram had no greed for kingdoms, and he had to wage this war to fulfil his promise given to the gods long ago because Ravana had unleashed a reign of terror and cruelty in this creation².}

Thereafter, after ensuring that Sita is purified by the sacred fire, the Lord accepted her³. {By putting Sita to the fire-test, the Lord ensured that all her taints and

impurities associated by remaining alone in a dirty atmosphere of the demon kingdom were burnt, and only her purified form lived³.}

Then Lord got aboard the Pushpak plane that he had won by default after his conquest of Lanka. He was accompanied by his chief friends such as Sugriv and Vibhishan, as well as his brother Laxman, and of course Sita, and then headed to his capital city of Ayodhya⁴.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 108 along with Chaupai line no. 14 that precede it; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 109.

⁴The Pushpak plane belonged to Ravana, and when Vibhishan ascended the throne it came to him as part of other assets of Lanka. Vibhishan had loaded it with gems and placed it before Lord Ram as a token of thanksgiving. However, the Lord asked Vibhishan to go to the sky and shower the valuables so that the monkeys could get whatever suited them. When the time came for departure for Ayodhya, Lord Ram requested Vibhishan to bring this plane so that he could go back by the air-route, as going back by land would take a long time. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 117-to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 118; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 119.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये द्वादशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye dvādaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 12th chapter of Kalidas's Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Chapter (Sarga) 13, verse nos. 1-79:

Introduction

After the conquest of Lanka and accepting Sita after her purification by the fire, Lord Ram boarded the Pushpak plane along with her, his brother Laxman, Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, Vibhishan, the new lord of the demons of Lanka, Jamvant, the bear king, chief commanders of his army from Kishkindha, as well as his trusted lieutenants such as Hanuman and Angad, and headed home to Ayodhya. This Canto primarily describes the Lord's journey home by the air-route, wherein he shows Sita all the important landmarks he had passed through during his long journey from Ayodhya to Lanka.

As the Pushpak plane moved towards Ayodhya, Lord Ram pointed out one-by-one the landmarks below: first came the vast ocean, then the forest of Dandakaranya, the monkey kingdom of Kishkindha, especially the hill-top where she

had thrown one of her jewels down when she saw a group of monkeys sitting in a huddle, with the aim that if Lord Ram came that way then they would show her jewels to him and help the Lord decide the direction in which she was being taken by Ravana. The Lord also told her how creepers, the leaves, and the deer and other animals on the ground had guided him by waving and nodding towards the south to hint to him that Sita had been taken away in that direction. Then the Lord sequentially showed her the charming environments of Mt. Vindhya and the Pampa lake, the beautiful Godavari river, his hermitage at Panchavati where Supernakha had been deformed, the many hermitages of great sages such as Sutikshan, Sharbhang and Agastya, the high peaks of Chitrakoot mountains, the clean waters of river Mandakani, sage Atri's and his wife Anusuiya's hermitage, Prayagraj where the three great rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati had their union, the kingdom of Nishad of the boatmen community, and finally the holy river Saryu on the bank of which the city of Ayodhya was situated.

At Ayodhya, his beloved and faithful brother Bharat, who had withdrawn from the city and spent time as a hermit at a place called Nandigram on the outskirts, and had been taking care of the kingdom in the Lord's absence from there, came forward to warmly welcome the Lord home. As the plane approached Ayodhya, the Lord could see dust being raised in the sky, and so he told Sita that he was sure that it was due to the march of a huge army that Bharat is leading to welcome him home. And indeed it was so, because as soon as the news of the Lord's arrival reached Ayodhya, everyone, from ministers and the royal priest Vashistha to ordinary citizens gathered to form a huge and grand procession to receive the Lord.

Finally the plane landed on the ground near Nandigram, and Lord Ram embraced Bharat and Shatrughan. Subsequently, everyone met each other with due respect, exchanged greetings and asked about each other's welfare. Then, after the initial embraces and show of joy, Lord Ram instructed his friends from Lanka, i.e. Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad as well as Vibhishan and his companions to proceed to the city on elephants and chariots that had been brought by Bharat to take Lord Ram back to the city, while the Lord himself boarded the Pushpak plane along with Laxman and Bharat to proceed to Ayodhya by the air route. Bharat met Sita aboard the plane and paid his respects to her.

In the meantime, Sugriv, Vibhishan, Jamvant and other friends of the Lord had assumed human forms, and the Lord introduced them to sage Vashistha, Bharat and others.

The procession moved back to Ayodhya on foot, while Lord Ram followed it on the plane from the rear. Midway, after travelling for about half a kosha (roughly one mile), the Lord took a brief halt at a royal garden that had been readied by Shatrughan to welcome the Lord and be available to him for a short rest before actually entering the city.

This is the main theme of this Canto no. 13. The events narrated here are also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 119 -to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 121; and (ii) Uttara Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 3-to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 10.

With this background information, let us now commence reading the text in detail as follows:

Verse no. 1:

अथात्मनः शब्दगुणगुणज्यः पदम्विमानेन विगाहमानः।

रत्नाकरम्वीक्ष्य मिथः स जायाम् रामाभिधानो हरिरित्युवाच॥ १३-१

athātmanah śabdaguṇamguṇajñyaḥ padamvimānena vigāhamānaḥ |
ratnākaramvīkṣya mithaḥ sa jāyām rāmābhidhāno harirityuvāca || 13-1

13-1. As the Pushpak plane, which had the special quality of being able to be guided or steered by voice signals or commands, flew in the sky and was over the ocean, at that time Lord Ram, who was a personified form of the omniscient Lord Vishnu, spoke privately to his wife (who was seated next to him aboard the plane) as follows:-

[Note--In the verses that follow herein below, Lord Ram would point out all the landmarks on the ground as the plane flew overhead towards Ayodhya. Obviously, these landmarks will be in the reverse order of sequence from what the Lord had followed during his outward journey to Lanka. Ocean was the first such landmark. The Lord had pointed out the bridge he had got constructed to get across--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 119-a.]

Verse no. 2:

वैदेहि पश्यस्समलयादिवभक्तम् मत्सेतुना फेनिलमम्बुराशिम्।

छायापथेनेव शरत्प्रसन्नम् आकाशमाविष्कृतचारुतारम्॥ १३-२

vaidehi paśya"malayādvibhaktam matsetunā phenilamamburāśim |
chāyāpatheneva śaratprasannam ākāśamāviṣṭacārutāram || 13-2

13-2. The Lord said to Sita: "Oh Vaidehi (Sita)! Have a look at the heaving ocean with its frothy waves below. The bridge that I got constructed on its surface had divided this immense reservoir of salty water as far as Mt. Malaya¹ in the same way as the celestial strip of the bright 'milky way' divides the firmament dotted by countless twinkling stars into two halves.

[Note--¹Mt. Malaya is the chain of mountains spreading across the southern edge of the Indian sub-continent, and in some texts it also refers to the mountain range on the northern edge of the island of Lanka. So therefore, Lord Ram told Sita that the bridge he had got constructed linked these two mountain ranges, with its one end on the land of India, and its other end on the land of Lanka.]

Verse no. 3:

गुरोर्यियक्षोः कपिलेन मेध्ये रसातलमसंक्रमिते तुरंगे।

तदर्थमुर्वीमवधारयद्भिः पूर्वेः किलायम्परिवर्धितो नः॥ १३-३

guroryiyakṣoḥ kapilena medhye rasātalamasāṅkramite turamge |
tadarthamurvīmavadhārayadbhiḥ pūrvaiḥ kilāyamparivardhito naḥ || 13-3

13-3. Sita, do you know how this ocean came into being? Well, in an ancient time, one of my forefathers named Sagar was doing a Ashwa-medha Yagya (the horse sacrifice). At that time, Indra, the king of gods and heaven, had stolen the sacrificial horse and hid it in the hermitage of sage Kapil. Sagar's sixty-thousand sons decided to find the horse, and so they dug up large swathes of the earth to locate it. The ocean owes its origin to this deep and wide trough they created on the surface of the earth. Since they circled around the earth while digging in search of the horse, the ocean that resulted also girdles the earth's all around its surface.

Again, since king Sagar was our ancestor and had been doing the horse-sacrifice when his sacrificial horse was stolen, and the earth was dug up by his sons to trace the horse, therefore the ocean is honoured by our family. Further, it is called 'Sagar' after the name of the king on whose behalf it was created.

Verse no. 4:

**गर्भमदधत्यर्कमरीचयोऽस्मात् विवृद्धिमत्राश्नुवते वसूनि।
अबिन्धनम्वहिनमसौ बिभर्ति प्रह्लादनमज्योतिरजन्यनेन॥ १३-४**

garbhamdadhatyarkamarīcayo'smāt vivṛddhimatrāśnuvate vasūni |
abindhanamvahnimasau bibharti prahlādanamjyotirajanyanena || 13-4

13- 4. This ocean is no ordinary reservoir of water, but it has some remarkable characters which have given it great glory. I shall tell you some of these rare qualities of the ocean that has made it so honourable.

See, it is from it that the sun's rays extract water in the form of water-vapour, and later on the same water is poured back on earth as rain by the clouds, thereby sustaining life in the world.

It is a great treasury of underwater gems and other treasures.

It is so magnanimous that it even harbours its enemy, the subterranean fire known as Barwanal, in its bosom. This fire is absolutely essential not only to sustain marine life by keeping the water warm but also by keeping the earth warm and making it habitable. And it is from it that the Moon, which lights up the sky during the darkness of the night, was born. {And that is why the water of the ocean heaves to form high tide during the full moon night as the deity of the ocean expresses its joy at the sight of the moon.}

Verse no. 5:

**ताम्रतामवस्थाम्प्रतिपद्यमानम् स्थितमदश व्याप दिशो महिम्ना।
विष्णोरिवास्यानवधारणीयम् ईदृक्तया रूपमियत्ताया वा॥ १३-५**

tāmtā mavasthāmpratipadyamānam sthitamdaśa vyāpa diśo mahimnā |
viṣṇorivāsyānavadhārāṇīyam īdr̥ktayā rūpamiyattāyā vā || 13-5

13-5. This ocean keeps on changing its form, nature and shape (and that is why it has been known by different names¹), and it is so extensive that it stretches far and wide to cover all the directions of the earth. That is why just as it is not possible to precisely and definitely define Lord Vishnu and the immensity of his virtues and

abilities by assigning any name to him or limiting his form to any one or more manifestations of his, so likewise it is not possible to precisely describe the ocean, measure its dimensions, and list its glories and values².

[Note--¹Primarily, the ocean is nothing but a reservoir of water, yet it has many names. Some of the examples are the Arctic, North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian and the South sea or the Antarctica. The word 'sea' is also used to represent what is basically a natural water reservoir like the ocean. Some of the seas are the Red sea, the Mediterranean sea, the Black sea, the Arabian sea, the Persian gulf, the Gulf of Mexico, the South China sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Straits of Malacca, the Singapore straits, the Gulf of Thailand, the Adriatic sea, the Caribbean sea, and the Aegean sea.

²It is a geographical fact that almost three quarters of the earth is covered by the ocean, either in its watery form, or in its icy form. Even a casual look of the earth from outer space shows it is a blue planet because of the ocean, with its land mass appearing as some greenish scum floating scattered on the surface of this huge body of water. The glory of the ocean is that inspite of its overwhelming presence and volume of water, it never swallows up the land mass, but maintains its boundaries in a dignified manner. All the major rivers on earth empty their contents into the ocean, but the latter never gets filled or overflows its shores. During severe droughts, the rivers, ponds, lakes and wells dry up, but no one has ever heard of the ocean drying up.]

Verse no. 6:

नभिप्ररूढाम्बुरुहासनेन संस्तूयमानः प्रथमेन धात्रा।

अमुम्युगान्तोचितयोगनिद्रः संहृत्य लोकान्पुरुषोऽधिषेते॥ १३-६

nābhiprarūḍhāmburuhāsanena saṁstūyamānaḥ prathamena dhātrā |
amumyugāntocitayoganidraḥ saṁhr̥tya lokānpuruṣo'dhiṣete || 13-6

13-6. The 'ocean' is eternal, it lasts even the end of this world when everything in existence is drowned in a gigantic deluge. At the time of this doomsday, which marks the conclusion of this world and all its life, Lord Vishnu withdraws himself into his primary cosmic form as the Primeval Being and comes here to recline in a meditative posture on the back of the coiled body of the Adi Sesh, the Primeval Serpent, who floats on the surface of the Kshir-Sagar, the cosmic ocean. The creator Brahma then emerges on a lotus flower sprouting from the navel of this Lord Vishnu (and Brahma then initiates the process of creating a new world).

{To wit, the ocean is an entity that continues to exist even when the rest of the world is ended. It exists then in the form of the all-enveloping ocean known as the Kshir-Sagar. When it is the time for a new creation to come into being, it is from this ocean that land mass emerges from its floor and rises up to its surface to harbour life which one observes on land. So while one aspect of life is born on this land mass that floats on the surface of the ocean, an equivalent aspect is born underwater in the ocean itself in the form of marine or aquatic life.}

Verse no. 7:

पक्षच्छिदा गोत्रभिदात्तगन्धाः शरण्यमेनम्शतशो महीधराः।

नृपा इवोपप्लविनः परेभ्यो धर्मोत्तरम्मध्यममाश्रयन्ते॥ १३-७

pakṣacchidā gotrabhidāttagandhāḥ śaranyamenamśataśo mahīdhrāḥ |
nrpā ivopaplavinah parebhyo dharmottarammadhyamamāśrayante || 13-7

13-7. Just as kings who are tormented by powerful enemies against whom they feel helpless, come and seek refuge with those kings who are strong, magnanimous, and ready to offer shelter to these helpless kings, so likewise the ancient mountains, which had the ability to fly in the sky, came to take shelter in the ocean when Indra, the king of heaven, had cut-off their wings to ground them so that they won't fly again, as he thought that these flying mountains were obstructing pathways of heaven and undermining his (Indra's) authority.

{With their wings chopped-off by Indra, the flying mountains of ancient time fell down, and the gracious ocean accepted them. Some of these mountains were so terrified of Indra's wrath that they pleaded with the deity of the ocean to hide them, and the deity obliged by allowing them to stay underwater. This is how and why the ocean bed has hills and valleys of its own. Other mountains who were bolder preferred to live over the ground, and so came into being the mountains and hills we see on the land.}

Verse no. 8:

रसातलादादिभवेन पुंसा भुवः प्रयुक्तोद्वहनक्रियायाः।

अस्याच्छमम्भः प्रलयप्रवृद्धम् मुहूर्तवक्त्राभरणम्बभूव॥ १३-८

rasātalādādibhavana puṁsā bhuvah prayuktodvahanakriyāyāḥ |
asyācchamambhaḥ pralayapravṛddham muhūrtavaktrābharaṇambabhūva ||
13-8

13-8. At the beginning of creation, when the earth remained submerged in the vast reservoir of the Kshir-Sagar, Lord Vishnu decided to save it in his primitive incarnation of the Boar. The Boar lifted the earth and brought it to the surface of the ocean. At that time when the earth was basically in the form of an embryo, the ocean appeared to form a veil that surrounded it to protect it from all sides before the Boar brought forth this newly born earth (just like an embryo is protected in a mother's womb by a membrane before it emerges into this world).

[Note--In this remarkable analogy, the ocean is regarded as the mother's womb in which the embryo of the earth took shape and was nourished. When the time of birth arrives, the embryo emerges from the mother's womb, but it is still wrapped in a protective membrane of viscous mucous known as the vernix caseosa that forms a bio-film around the newly born child. Just like the case of this film being washed-off with the child's first bath, so was the case of the earth being cleared by the Boar of the frothy and dirty fluids that stuck to it at the time of its creation when it emerged from the bowls of the earth.]

Verse no. 9:

मुखार्पणेषु प्रकृतिप्रगल्भाः स्वयन्तरंगाधरदानदक्षः।

अनन्यसामान्यकलत्रवृत्तिः पिबत्यसौ पाययते च सिन्धुः॥ १३-९

mukhārpaṇeṣu prakṛtipragalbhāḥ svayamtararṅgādharaḍānadakṣaḥ |
ananyasāmānyakalatravṛttiḥ pibatyasau pāyayate ca sindhūḥ || 13-9

13-9. This ocean is remarkable in other ways also. People usually enjoy being kissed by an unknown woman, but rarely would they reciprocate this gesture by a return kiss. But this ocean is so gracious that when the rivers come to it to kiss its shores and pour their water in it to symbolise total surrender to it, the ocean not only accepts the rivers' outpouring of emotion by accepting their waters but reciprocates their gestures in the form of heaving waves that rush towards the land in order to embrace the incoming rivers and accept them in its fold.

[Note--The point where the river opens into the ocean is called the mouth of the river, and it is always wider than the rest of the river to imply that the deity of the river has opened its lips wide to kiss the deity of the ocean. In return, the deity of the ocean sends heaving waves to welcome the guest and move inland, towards the shore, to kiss the deity of the river even before it actually reaches the main body of the ocean.]

Verse no. 10:

ससत्त्वमादाय नदीमुखाम्भः संमीलयन्तो विवृताननत्वात्।

अमी तिरोभिस्तिमयः सरन्ध्रैः ऊध्वम्वितन्वन्ति जलप्रवाहान्॥ १३-१०

sasatvamādāya nadīmukhāmbhaḥ saṁmīlayanto vivṛtānanatvāt |
amī tirobhistimayaḥ sarandhraiḥ ūdhvamvitanvanti jalapravāhān || 13-10

13-10. Lord Ram pointed out to Sita an interesting scene unfolding in the ocean below: "Look there. These are huge fish (the whale) that open their mouths wide and gulp in large draughts of water and smaller fish that float in it, and then after closing their mouths they spray this water out in the form of jets that spurt out through small holes or apertures present in their heads.

Verse no. 11:

मातंगनक्रैः सहसोत्पतद्भिर्ः भिन्नान्दिवधा पश्य समुद्रफेनान्।

कपोलसंसर्पितया य एषाम् व्रजन्ति कर्णक्षणचामरत्वम्॥ १३-११

mātaṁganakraiḥ sahasotpatadbhirḥ bhinnāndvidhā paśya samudraphenān |
kapolasamsarpitayā ya eṣām vrajanti karṇakṣaṇacāmaratvam || 13-11

13-11. The monster crocodiles, that are like elephants of the water, leap up suddenly and cause the water on the surface to foam and cleave into two--giving the impression that alligator-shaped ear-rings are dangling from the earlobes of the deity of the ocean.

[Note--The foaming surface of the ocean is likened to the head of the deity of the ocean, and when the crocodiles come to the surface they split this foam into two halves. This gives the impression that the deity of the ocean is wearing ear-rings shaped like a crocodile or an alligator.]

Verse no. 12:

वेलानिलाय प्रसृता भुजंगा वहोर्मिस्फूर्जथुनिर्विशेषाः।
सूर्याशुसंपर्कविवृद्धरागैः व्यज्यन्त एते मणिभिः फणस्थैः॥ १३-१२

velānilāya prasṛtā bhujaṅgā vahormivisphūrjathunirviśeṣāḥ |
sūryāśusamparkavivṛddharāgaiḥ vyajyanta ete maṇibhiḥ phaṇasthaiḥ ||
13-12

13-12. The large waves that are seen on the surface of the ocean are actually huge sea-serpents that have come up to breathe fresh air moving in from the surrounding land, but when the rays of the sun fall on them then the jewels embedded in their heads begin to shine. This makes it possible for one to realise that these are not merely waves of the water but huge sea-serpents.

[Note--In some species of serpents, a viscous liquid effuses out from their hoods, and when it solidifies it glows in sunlight to resemble a shining jewel.

There is yet another way of interpreting this verse as follows: The huge sea-serpents emerge from the bosom of the ocean to breathe fresh air on its surface. When sunlight falls on their hoods, the gems embedded in them shines with a glitter. These are not sea-serpents actually, but huge waves on the surface of the ocean, and the sparkling light that one observes in them, that gives the impression of glittering jewels on the hoods of sea-serpents, is actually the result of sunlight being reflected from water molecules in these waves.]

Verse no. 13:

तवाधरस्पर्धिषु विद्रुमेषु पर्यस्तमेतत्सहसोर्मिवेगात्।
ऊर्ध्वाङ्कुरप्रोतमुखम्कथंचित् क्लेशादपक्रामति शङ्खयूथम्॥ १३-१३

tavādharaspardhiṣu vidrumeṣu paryastametatsahasormivegāt |
ūrdhvāṅkuraprotamukhamkathamcit kleśādapakrāmati śaṅkhayūtham ||
13-13

13-13. Look Sita, the marine animal known as the gastropod, which lives in its own spiralled shell and is known by the common name of a marine conch, are dashed so violently against the coral reefs of the ocean that they begin to bleed and get a red colour like the pink coloured lips of yours. They get numbed by this blow and often are stuck in the sharp edges of the coral, so that they aren't able to move as freely as earlier.

Verse no. 14:

प्रवृत्तमात्रेण पयांसि पातुम् आवर्तवेगाद्भ्रमता घनेन।

आभाति भूयिष्ठमयम्समुद्रः प्रमथ्यमानो गिरिणेव भूयः॥ १३-१४

pravṛttamātreṇa payāṁsi pātum āvartavegādbhramatā ghanena |
ābhāti bhūyiṣṭhamayamsamudraḥ pramathyamāno giriṇeva bhūyaḥ || 13-14

13-14. Look there, a dark bank of rotating clouds have lowered its snout to the surface of the ocean to drink its water by sucking it, resulting in creation of huge waves and whirlpools¹, giving the impression that the ocean is being churned by Mt. Mandrachal once again as it was done in some ancient time (when the gods and the demons had used this mountain as the churning rod to churn the celestial ocean in search of its gems and find the pitcher of nectar).

[Note--¹Lord Ram was witnessing a tornado in action.]

Verse no. 15:

दूरादयश्चक्रनिभस्य तन्वी तमालतालीवनराजिनीला।

आभाति वेला लवणाम्बुराशेः धारानिबद्धेव कलङ्करेखा॥ १३-१५

dūrādayaścakranibhasya tanvī tamālatālivanarājīnīlā |
ābhāti velā lavaṇāmburāśeḥ dhārānibaddheva kalaṅkarekhā || 13-15

13-15. {The plane was about to reach the northern shore of the ocean. So in this verse Lord Ram describes the scene which was observed on the ground on the shore of the ocean and the surrounding areas as seen from the sky.}

Look there Sita: on the shore of the ocean are visible slender stake-like structures that are rusty-black in colour as if they are made of iron. Such structures are called palisades, and they are usually erected as fortifications to prevent intruders and invaders from entering a country from the side of the ocean or the sea. These tall pillar-like objects are actually coconut and bay-leaf plants. The shore of the ocean is lined by such trees that gives the impression of a serrated edge of a discus.

[Note--The shore of the ocean was shaped like a crescent moon, and its edge had a line of slender coconut and bay plants, some tall and others a little short, giving the impression of a discus with sharp pointed edge.]

Verse no. 16:

वेलानिलः केतकरेणुभिस्ते संभावयत्याननमायताक्षि।

मामक्षमम्मण्डनकालहानेः वेत्तीव बिम्बाधरबद्धतृष्णम्॥ १३-१६

velānilaḥ ketakareṇubhiste sambhāvayatyānanamāyatākṣi |
māmakṣamammanḍanakālahāneḥ vettīva bimbādharabaddhatṛṣṇam || 13-16

13-16. {Sita was amazed at the sight she saw on the ground from the plane. So, Lord Ram addresses her as a 'wide-eyed lady' in this verse.}

Oh wide-eyed lady! The breeze of the ocean is laden by pollen that bears the sweet scent of the Ketaka plant (*Pandanus odorifer*)¹, and it rises up from the surface of the land around the ocean to reach high up to touch your lips to tease me that it is doing what I could not do.

[Note--¹The Ketaka plant is botanically known as *Pandanus odorifer*. It has strong fragrant leaves, and is generally found in marshy land with a saline soil near seas. By its sweet aroma, it attracts serpents.]

Verse no. 17:

एते वयम्सैकतभिन्नशुक्ति पर्यस्तमुक्तापटलम्पयोधेः।

प्राप्ता मुहूर्तेन विमानवेगात् कूलम्फलावर्जितपूगमालम्॥ १३-१७

ete vayamsaikatabhinnasukti paryastamuktāpaṭalampayodheḥ |
prāptā muhūrtena vimānavegāt kūlamphalāvarjitapūgamālam || 13-17

13-17. See, due to the speed of the plane we have so quickly arrived on the other shore of the ocean (i.e. the northern coast of the ocean) where the sand is covered by oysters which have opened up to scatter their pearls all around, and the coast is lined by areca catechu palm trees which are bent under the weight of their fruits, the areca nut (also known as the betel nut).

Verse no. 18:

कुरुष्व तावत्करभोरु पश्चात् मार्गे मृगप्रेक्षिणि दृष्टिपातम्।

एषा विदूरीभवतः समुद्रात् सकानना निष्पततीव भूमिः॥ १३-१८

kuruṣva tāvatkarabhoru paścāt mārge mṛgaprekṣiṇi drṣṭipātam |
eṣā vidūrībhavataḥ samudrāt sakānanā niṣpatatīva bhūmiḥ || 13-18

13-18. Oh lady with a deer-gaze and having thighs like the thick stem of the plantain tree! Turn back and see the land below. It is a thickly forested land, and it seems that it has emerged from the ocean that is fast receding away from us as the plane moves inland and further away from the ocean.

Verse no. 19:

क्वचित्पथा संचरते सुराणाम् क्वचिद्घनानाम्पतताम्क्वचिच्च।

यथाविधो मे मनसोऽभिलाषः प्रवर्तते पश्य तथा विमानम्॥ १३-१९

kvacitpathā saṁcarate surāṇām kvacidghanānāmpatatāmkvacicca |
yathāvidho me manaso'bhilāṣaḥ pravartate paśya tathā vimānam || 13-19

13-19. My dear Sita! This Pushpak plane is very fantastic: it moves in accordance to my wish. Sometimes it follows the path that the gods would use to travel, at other times it cruises through the path of the clouds, and at other times it follows the route used by the birds to go from one place to another (which is sometimes high up in the sky and sometimes nearer to the earth).

[Note--The Pushpak plane was controlled by the mind of its chief rider. It could be turned left or right, and lifted up and lowered down by merely wishing it to do so. Perhaps it was controlled by a sensor that was linked to some kind of device attached to the commander's head that would sense signals emanating from his brain, telling the plane in which direction to move. There were no complicated physical steering mechanisms nor a complicated electronic panel to navigate the plane, neither was there the need for the chief patron to be an expert in technical matters to fly the plane. It was semi self-propelled, and like modern-day satellites that are remote-controlled by signals from the ground, the plane was controlled by the thought-signals emanating from the patron's mind. Perhaps the chief pilot wore some sort of a helmet or other kind of gadget fixed to his head, and this gadget caught signals from the brain that it conveyed to the control panel of the plane by a wireless connection. Surely, science and technology were so advanced in that ancient time that such a plane could actually be built. Though science and technology has made progress by leaps and bounds in our so-called modern world, and of late there is a lot of talk of AI (artificial intelligence)-driven tech, yet this kind of plane is still far away from even being imagined.]

Verse no. 20:

असौ महेन्द्रदिवपदानगन्धि स्त्रिमार्गगावीचिविमर्दशीतः।

आकाशवायुर्दिनयौवनोत्थान् आचामति स्वेदलवान्मुखे ते॥ १३-२०

asau mahendradvipadānagandhi strimārgagāvicivimardaśītaḥ |
ākāśavāyurdinayauvanotthān ācāmati svedalavānmukhe te || 13-20

13-20. {Addressing Sita, Lord Ram continued--} The breeze blowing in the sky--which is rich with the fragrance of the ichor¹ effusing from the head of Indra's elephant known as Erawat, a fragrance that it has picked up while blowing in the heaven, and at the same time has become cool by wafting over the waves of the celestial river of gods known as the 'Akash Ganga' (literally meaning the holy river Ganges that flows through the heaven; which in modern world refers to the milky-way)--is helping to provide comfort to you by drying up the sweat beads, caused by the heat of the midday, on your face.

[Note—¹The 'ichor' is the fragrant viscous fluid effusing from the forehead of a mature male elephant during the rutting season. In Hinduism, the ichor of Indra's elephant, known as 'Erawat', represents grandeur, majesty and youthfulness, because this adult and powerful elephant has been anointed to be the mount of Indra, the king of gods, which is a special privilege that no other member of the animal kingdom, let alone an elephant, possesses.

When the breeze blows anywhere, say in a garden, it is natural for it carry the scent of the surrounding areas along with it, which in the case of a garden would be the fragrance of flowers. If the breeze blows over a mango orchard for example, the sweet aroma of ripe mangoes carried by it would make people aware of the presence of such an orchard even in a place far away from the actual location of the mango trees. So therefore, when the breeze blew in the sky it naturally picked up the scent of the ichor emanating from Erawat's head. This fragrance is spread all over in the heavens.

Secondly, it is a common observance that the breeze blowing inland from the sea is always cool as compared to its counterpart blowing in from the heated land during hot summer days. So therefore, the breeze that Lord Ram and Sita experienced aboard the Pushpak plane was cool when it reached them as it had previously wafted over the cool waves of the akash-ganga.]

Verse no. 21:

**करेण वातायनलम्बितेन स्पृष्टस्त्वया चण्डि कुतूहलिन्या।
आमुञ्चतीवाभरणम्वितीयम् उद्भिन्नविद्युद्वलयो घनस्ते॥ १३-२१**

kareṇa vātāyanalambitena spr̥ṣṭastvayā caṇḍi kutūhalinyā |
āmuñcatīvābharanamdvitīyam udbhinnavidyudvalayo ghanaste || 13-21

13-21. My dear Sita! When you extend your hand outside the window of the plane to touch the clouds playfully and out of curiosity, then the bangles around your wrist begin to shine with layers of dazzling light as if the deity of the clouds has come forward to put another bangle around your wrist.

[Note--The plane was moving ahead with great speed. So when Sita put her hands outside the window to feel the soft texture and the coolness of the surrounding clouds, the resultant friction that was caused by the bangles moving speedily through the moist layers of the cloud created electrical charges that produced sparks, which in turn created a scintillating display of colours. It appeared that the deity of the clouds is putting another ring of shining bracelets on Sita's wrists.]

Verse no. 22:

**अमी जनस्थानमपोढविघ्नम् मत्वा समारब्धनवोटजानि।
अध्यासते चीरभृतो यथास्वम् चिरोज्झितान्याश्रममण्डलानि॥ १३-२२**

amī janasthānamapodhaviḥnam matvā samārabdhanavotajāni |
adhyāsate cīrabhr̥to yathāsvam cirojjhitānyāśramamaṇḍalāni || 13-22

13-22. Look below: you will observe that many ascetics dressed in ochre clothes have erected new hermitages at places that they had abandoned long ago out of Ravana's fear. When the news of the demon's death reached them, they became fearless, and came back to re-establish their hermitages which they had abandoned earlier.

Verse no. 23:

सैषा स्थली यत्र विचिन्वता त्वाम् भ्रष्टम्मया नूपुरमेकमुर्व्याम्।
अदृश्यत त्वच्चरणारविन्द विश्लेषदुःखादिव बद्धमौनम्॥ १३-२३

saiṣā sthālī yatra vicinvatā tvām bhraṣṭammayā nūpuramekamurvyām |
adr̥śyata tvaccaraṇāravinda viśleṣaduḥkhādiva baddhamaunam || 13-23

13-23. {Pointing out a particular spot on the ground below, Lord Ram told Sita--} See at that spot below: it was here that I found one of your anklet jewels that got loose from your foot and had fallen to the ground (while Ravana was taking you away). While I was searching for you in the wild forest, I found it lying silently in a sad and sombre mood on the ground, as if it too was grieving, like me, at having lost contact with you.

{When I found this piece of jewel, I immediately recognised it to be yours. And it was good in a sense because it proved to me that I was on track and moving in the right direction to search for you.}

Verse no. 24:

त्वमक्षसा भीरु यतोऽपनीता तम्मार्गमेताः कृपया लता मे।
अदर्शयन्वक्तुमशक्नुवत्यः शाखाभिरावर्जितपल्लवाभिः॥ १३-२४

tvamrakṣasā bhīru yato'panītā tammārgametāḥ kṛpayā latā me |
adarśayanvaktumaśaknuvatyaḥ śākhābhirāvarjitapallavābhiḥ || 13-24

13-24. You had become very timid and terrified at that time (bhīru) (and probably this anklet jewel got dislodged from your foot due to your shivering while you might have been fiddling with it nervously). The creepers that lay on the way wished to tell me the direction in which Ravana had taken you away, but unfortunately they couldn't speak. So therefore, to compensate their inability to communicate with me in words, they used gestures by bending themselves and making their leaves sway in the direction that I was expected to proceed in search of you.

Verse no. 25:

मृग्यश्च दर्भाङ्कुरनिर्व्यपेक्षाः तवागतिर्ज्यम्समबोधयन्माम्।
व्यापारयन्त्यो दिशि दक्षिणस्याम् उत्पक्षराजीनि विलोचनानि॥ १३-२५

mṛgyaśca darbhāṅkuranirvyapekṣāḥ tavāgatijñyamsamabodhayanmām |
vyāpārayantyo diśi dakṣiṇasyām utpakṣarājīni vilocanāni || 13-25

13-25. When female deer observed that I am distraught and unable to find out in which direction you had gone, then they raised their heads, and opening their eyes wide they would look in the south direction so as to indicate to me that you had gone in that direction.

[Note--Beautiful ladies are compared to the doe, and their eyes are often called doe-eyes by poets. The deer would open their eyes wide to remind me of you, and then by

looking in the south direction they were literally telling me that 'your doe-eyed Sita has gone that way'.]

Verse no. 26:

एतद्दिगरेर्माल्यवतः पुरस्तात् आविर्भत्यम्बरलेखि शृङ्गम्।
नवम्पयो यत्र घनैर्मया च त्वद्विप्रयोगाश्रु समम्बिसृष्टम्॥ १३-२६

etadgirermālyavataḥ purastāt āvirbhatyambaralekhi śṛṅgam |
navampayo yatra ghanairmayā ca tvadviprayogāśru samamvisrṣṭam || 13-26

13-26. Look there at those sky-touching high peaks of the range of mountains called Malyawan. I had spent the rainy season there. When rain fell down from the clouds there, my eyes also began to rain tears in your memory. {To wit, I had wept for you a lot while staying atop the mountains during the rainy season. The Lord is referring to the four months of the rainy season he had spent on the summit of this mountain in Kishkindha before launching the campaign to Lanka to free Sita from Ravana.}¹

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 12. But in Ram Charit Manas, the name of the mountain is Prabarshan, and not Malyawan.]

Verse no. 27:

गन्धश्च धाराहतपल्वलानाम् कादम्बमर्धोद्गतकेसरम्च।
स्निग्धाश्च केकाः शिखिनाम्बभूवुः यस्मिन्नसहयानि विना त्वया मे॥ १३-२७

gandhaśca dhārāhatapalvalānām kādambamardhodgatakesaramca |
snigdhaśca kekāḥ śikhināmbabhūvuḥ yasminnasahyāni vinā tvayā me || 13-27

13-27. At that time, the pleasing fragrance arising from lakes that had been filled by fresh supply of rain-water, and in which young stems of the freshly sprouting Kadamba flower (the tropical tree called Neolamarckia cadamba; it has fragrant, ball-shaped, orange-yellow flowers; it is also called the Bur-flower tree) were growing in abundance, as well as the enchanting cries of peacocks dancing in the rain--these natural scenes of beauty became unbearable for me as they filled my heart with sadness instead of comforting me.

Verse no. 28:

पूर्वानुभूतस्मरता च यत्र कम्पोत्तरम्भीरु तवोपगूढम्।
गुहाविसारीण्यतिवाहितानि मया कथंचिद्घनगर्जितानि॥ १३-२८

pūrvānubhūtamsmaratā ca yatra kampottarambhīru tavopagūḍham |
guhāvisārīṇyativāhitāni mayā kathamcidghanagarjitāni || 13-28

13-28. Oh timid lady (bhīru)! I remembered those days when upon hearing the thunder and rumbling of the rain-bearing clouds that echoed in the cave where we once used to live during the rainy season, you would feel so terrified that you would cower in fear and grasp me for protection. This memory made me extremely sad when I was alone while spending the days of the rainy season on the summit of Mt. Malayawan.

Verse no. 29:

**आसारसिक्तक्षितिबाष्पयोगात् मामक्षिणोद्यत्र विभिन्नकोशैः।
विडम्ब्यमाना नवकन्दलैस्ते विवाहधूमारुणलोचनश्रीः॥ १३-२९**

āsārasiktakṣitibāṣpayogāt māmakṣiṇodyatra vibhinnakośaiḥ |
viḍambyamānā navakandalaiste vivāhadhūmāruṇalocanaśrīḥ || 13-29

13-29. The continuous rainfall caused warm vapour to rise from the hot surface of the earth. When the Kandali plant (known as Stinging nettle in English) came in contact with this humid environment, its buds opened and assumed a red hue. This reminded me of the time when your (Sita's) eyes had become red due to the irritation caused by the smoke rising from the offerings made to the ritualistic fire that was lit during our marriage ceremony. This memory made was very painful for me, and it made me very sad and distraught.

Verse no. 30:

**उपान्तवानीरवनोपगूढानि आलक्ष्यपारिप्लवसारसानि।
दूरावतीर्णा पिबतीव खेदात् अमूनि पम्पासलिलानि दृष्टिः॥ १३-३०**

upāntavānīravanopagūḍhāni ālakṣyapāriplavasārasāni |
dūrāvatīrṇā pibatīva khedāt amūni pampāsālilāni dṛṣṭiḥ || 13-30

13-30. Look there: the water of the Pampa lake¹ is not clearly visible from the plane because it is surrounded by thickets of tall cane trees, reeds and grass that bend towards its surface in their attempt to drink its water. One has to strain one's eyes to get a glimpse of the lake from our position in the sky.

[Note--¹The Pampa lake was a fresh-water lake that had exceptional natural beauty and was surrounded by a verdant green forest with animals and green trees. Lord Ram and Laxman had gone there while searching for Sita, and they had taken a short rest on its banks. The visit of the Lord to the Pampa lake, as well as its captivating charm has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39-to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 41. The gods had visited the Lord at this place to pay their respects to him. Sage Narad too came to meet Lord Ram at Pampa lake--refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-11 that precede Doha no. 41.

Sita hadn't accompanied Lord Ram to Pampa lake as Ravana had abducted her from Panchavati that was situated further away, to the north of it. So that is why the

Lord pointed it out specially to her, and also because he had spent some time on the lake's banks to rest.

Arrival of the plane above the Pampa lake means that it has crossed the kingdom of Kishkindha and was near the part of the land where Panchavati and other sites were located, and where hermitages of great sages whom the Lord had met on his outward journey too were located.]

Verse no. 31:

अत्रावियुक्तानि रथङ्गनाम्ना मन्योन्यदत्तोत्पलकेसराणि।
द्वन्द्वानि दूरान्तरवर्तिना ते मया प्रिये सस्मितमीक्षितानि॥ १३-३१

atrāviyuktāni rathaṅganāmnā manyonyadattotpalakesarāṇi |
dvandvāni dūrāntaravartinā te mayā priye sasmitamīkṣitāni || 13-31

13-31. My dear (priye)! Here in this Pampa lake I could see pairs of birds known as Chakva-Chakvi (male and female ruddy duck or goose, which are also called waterfowls)¹ who stayed together no matter what happens. I could see the male bird feeding his female partner nectar-laden pollen from the lotus flower. Since I was alone and separated from you, this sight made me sad; I wondered when I would be able to see a similar day (when you and me would stay close to each other, and I would be able to feed you with my own hands to show my love for you).

[Note--¹The Chakva-Chakvi couple (male and female ruddy duck or the ruddy goose are waterfowls) are regarded as inseparable and a stellar example of love and affection between a male and his female partner. These birds form a strong and lifelong bond, and considered as symbols of marital fidelity in Indian folklore. Their bonding and love for each other is often used as a metaphor or analogy to explain a bond of love between a husband and the wife, or two inseparable lovers.]

Verse no. 32:

इमाम्तटाशोकलताम्य तन्वीम् स्तनाभिरामस्तबकाभिनमाम्।
त्वत्प्राप्तिबुद्ध्या परिरब्धुकामः सौमित्रिणा साश्रुरहम्निषिद्धः॥ १३-३२

imāmtaṭāśokalatāmca tanvīm stanābhirāmastabakābhinamrām |
tvatprāptibuddhyā parirabdhukāmaḥ saumitriṇā sāśrurahamniṣiddhaḥ || 13-32

13-32. I was grieving so much for you that I had lost control over my mind and behaviour; I behaved almost like a madman. Once (near lake Pampa), when I saw some slender creepers clinging to the branches of the Ashoka tree in order to find support, as they were being weighed down by clusters of flowers growing on them in pairs, I became so overwhelmed that I clung to these creepers and embraced them thinking them to be your arms. At that time, when Laxman observed my madness and disoriented state of mind, he began to weep, and he somehow comforted me and separated me from the creepers.

Verse no. 33:

अमूर्विमानान्तरलम्बिनीनाम् श्रुत्वा स्वनम्काञ्चनकिङ्किणीनाम्।
प्रत्युद्व्रजन्तीव खमुत्पतन्त्यो गोदावरीसारसपङ्क्तयस्त्वाम्॥ १३-३३

amūrvimānāntaralambinīnām śrutvā svanamkāñcanakiṅkiṇīnām |
pratyudvrajantīva khamutpatantyo godāvarīsārasapaṅktayastvām || 13-33

13-33. Look here, the jingling sound emanating from the golden bells strunged in circles and attached to our plane, is attracting rows of Saras birds (the storks) who are roaming around the banks of river Godavari below. Thinking that this sound of the bells represents a large flock of birds of their own kind arriving from the sky, they are rising up in large numbers to meet the visitors, which in turn seems to mean that they are rising up to welcome you to their homes on the ground.

Verse no. 34:

एषा त्वया पेशलमध्ययापि घटाम्बुसंवर्धितबालचूता।
आनन्दयत्युन्मुखकृष्णसारा दृष्टा चिरात्पञ्चवटी मनो मे॥ १३-३४

eṣā tvayā peśalamadhyayāpi ghaṭāmbusaṁvardhitabālacūtā |
ānandayatyunmukhakṛṣṇasārā dr̥ṣṭā cirātpañcavaṭī mano me || 13-34

13-34. {The plane now arrives at Panchavati.} Seeing Panchavati after such a long time, my heart jumps with joy. Look down there--the antelopes are raising their heads to look up and see our plane. Do you remember--it was here that you had watered mango trees by carrying small pitchers of water yourself by supporting these pitchers on your slender waist (as you found it difficult to carry them in your hands)?

[Note--Sita was a princess and not accustomed to hard manual labour. To water the plants around their hermitage at Panchavati, Sita used to bring small pitchers of water from the nearby water-body. In order to carry the water-filled pitchers she would support them on her waists while walking. The other way to carry them would be on the head or directly in the hand. But Sita found it more convenient to rest the rounded body of the pitcher that fitted in well in the concave or curved hollow of her slim waist. We must not forget that Kalidas was a poet, and being a poet he more often than not used the curvaceous form of the female body to describe the beauty of a scene.]

Verse no. 35:

अत्रानुगोदमृगयानिवृत्तः तरंगवातेन विनीतखेदः।
रहस्त्वदुत्सङ्गनिषण्णमूर्धा स्मरामि वानीरगृहेषु सुप्तः॥ १३-३५

atrānugodammṛgayānivr̥ttaḥ taraṅgavātena vinītakhedah |
rahas̥tvadutsaṅganiṣaṇṇamūrdhā smarāmi vānīragṛheṣu suptaḥ || 13-35

13-35. I recall those pleasant days when we were alone in bowers of cane trees, and the cool breeze blowing in from the river Godavari would make me feel drowsy after

I returned tired from hunting in the forest. Then I would put my head on your lap to sleep soundly.

Verse no. 36:

भ्रूभेदमात्रेण पदान्मघोनः प्रभ्रंशयाम् यो नहुषमचकार।

तस्याविलाम्भःपरिशुद्धिहेतोः भौमो मुनेः स्थानपरिग्रहोऽयम्॥ १३-३६

bhrūbhedamātreṇa padānmaghonaḥ prabhraṁśayām yo nahuṣamcakāra |
tasyāvilāmbhaḥparišuddhihetoh bhaumo muneḥ sthānaparigraho'yam ||
13-36

13-36. Look there in front. Here is the hermitage of sage Agastya¹ who had such immense spiritual and mystical powers that once he had made king Nahush fall from the status of Indra (i.e. from the status of attaining kingship of the heaven) by merely knitting his eyebrows to frown and express his annoyance at him².

When the star called Canopus that represent him rises in the sky, then even the turbid waters that accumulate on the ground after rainfall become clear³. {To wit, after the first rains the water forms small dirty puddles on the ground, and even ponds and lakes have dirty water that drains into them from surrounding areas. But as the rainy season progresses, the time comes for this star to rise prominently in the sky, and by this time abundance of rainfall clears the dirtiness of the water of the water-bodies on the earth and they become filled with clean water.}

[Note--¹Lord Ram had met sage Agastya on his outward journey to the forest. It was this sage who had advised Lord Ram to go and stay for sometime at Panchavati on the banks of river Godavari. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12, and (ii) Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line nos. 15-18 that precede it.}

²King Nahush: There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

King Nahush's example is often cited to show how stubbornness, adamancy and an arrogant nature more often than not backfires, and is detrimental to one's own good well-being. It is cited in Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas where Lord Ram has used it as an example to try and dissuade Sita to abandon her determination to

accompany him to the forest, and instead heed his advice to stay home and serve her mother-in-law (Kaushalya) in deference to his wishes, for if she does not heed him she would get nothing but misery and pain in the bargain. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 61.}

Laxman too cites king Nahush's example to say how arrogance and haughtiness makes a person act wildly without thinking the evilness he is perpetrating. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 228.}

²Canopus is the brightest star in the southern constellation of Carina. It is named Agastya in ancient Indian astronomy. Agastya is said to be the 'cleanser of waters', since by the time of rising of this star in the month of August, the waters of rivers, lakes and ponds etc. have gradually settled down and have thereby lost their turbidity.]

Verse no. 37:

**त्रेताग्निधूमाग्रमनिन्द्यकीर्तेः तस्येदमाक्रान्तविमानमार्गम्।
घ्रात्वा हविर्गन्धि रजोविमुक्तः समश्नुते मे लघिमानमात्मा॥ १३-३७**

tretāgnidhūmāgramanindyakīrteḥ tasyedamākrāntavimānamārgam |
ghrātvā havirgandhi rajovimuktaḥ samaśnute me laghimānamātmā || 13-37

13-37. It is the smoke rising up into the sky from the offerings made by the most honourable, revered and renowned sage Agastya in the three kinds of sacred fires (such as Garhyapatya, Dakshinagni and Ahawaniya fires) that he has lit for his fire sacrifice rituals, that I am inhaling now. This smoke containing the essence of the sacrificial offerings is very auspicious and rejuvenating, and by smelling (inhaling, sniffing) it my soul has been purified of all inauspicious thoughts and cleansed of all Raja Gunas (qualities that represent worldly attachments, mundane affairs and lustful desires). I feel very fresh and invigorated.

Verse no. 38:

**एतन्मुमुनेर्मानिनि शतकर्णेः पञ्चाप्सरो नाम विहारवारि।
आभाति पर्यन्तवनम्बिदूरात् मेघान्तरालक्ष्यमिवेन्दुबिम्बम्॥ १३-३८**

etanmumunermānini śātakarṇeḥ pañcāpsaro nāma vihāravāri |
ābhāti paryantavanamvidūrāt meghāntarālakṣyamivendubimbam || 13-38

13-38. Oh honourable lady (mānini)! Further down there is the hermitage of sage known as Shatkarni Rishi. It is represented by the lake called Panchaasar (literally meaning a cluster of five lakes; Panch=five, Sar=lake). It is surrounded on all the sides by dense and dark forests so much so that it is difficult to have a clear view of it from the sky except through some gap in the thick covering of trees, just like the case of it being difficult to see the clear disc of a full moon if it is surrounded by thick banks of dark clouds, except through a random gap in these clouds.

Verse no. 39:

पुरा स दर्भाङ्कुरमात्रवृत्तिः चरन्मृगैः सार्धमृषिर्मघोना।
समाधिभीतेन किलोपनीतः पञ्चाप्सरोयौवनकूटबन्धम्॥ १३-३९

purā sa darbhāṅkuramātravṛttiḥ caranmṛgaiḥ sārddhamṛṣirmaghonā |
samādhibhītena kilopanītaḥ pañcāpsaroyauvanakūṭabandham || 13-39

13-39. {The following two verses, nos. 39-40, briefly narrate the story related to sage Shatkarni.}

In some earlier time, this sage (Shatkarni) used to do severe penance. While doing penances, he would survive by eating only freshly sprouted kush grass like the rest of the deer around him. Seeing him doing such intense penance, Indra (who is always jealous of anyone whom he thinks was eying his heavenly crown), became jealous of the sage, thinking that by doing severe penance and observing strict austerities, the sage wished to accumulate sufficient mystical and spiritual powers to claim his heavenly throne.

Hence, to make the sage fall from his spiritual pursuits, Indra threw a bait in the form of sending five celestial damsels, known as Apsaras, to lure him off his penances and austerities by their lustful overtures and gestures. Unaware of Indra's crooked designs, the innocent sage fell in the trap.

{To wit, Indra sent five voluptuous young damsels who corrupted sage Shatkarni, and all his accumulated spiritual merit became null and void. As a result, the sage lost his spiritual and mystical powers that he had so diligently accumulated over a long time.}

[Note-- The word 'Indra' comes from the word 'Indri', meaning the sense organs of the body that perceive the five senses of touch (skin), smell (nose), taste (tongue), hearing (ears) and sight (eyes). The main idea here is that no matter how rigorously a person may have conducted himself for a long time, as a result of which he had acquired certain abilities and powers, yet if he allows himself to fall prey to the lure of any of these senses, then all his efforts would come undone. The 'five' Apasaras sent by Indra symbolise these 'five' the lure of these five senses as outlined herein above. So therefore, by these mythical stories and metaphors, ancient scriptures try to warn wise people to be careful about their conduct and their dealings with this gross world.]

Verse no. 40:

तस्यायमन्तर्हितसौधभाजः प्रसक्तसंगीतमृदङ्गघोषः।
वियद्गतः पुष्पकचन्द्रशालाः क्षणम्प्रतिश्रुन्मुखराः करोति॥ १३-४०

tasyāyamantarhitasaudhabhājah prasaktasaṅgītamṛdaṅgaghoṣaḥ |
viyadgataḥ puṣpakacandraśālāḥ kṣaṇampratiśrunmukharāḥ karoti || 13-40

13-40. The sound of music and dance that you hear is originating from the underwater mansion of that sage (Shatkarni, who had been deceived by the five Apasaras sent by Indra to demote him and prevent him from rising higher in his spiritual pursuit and acquiring sufficient mystical powers so as to claim the throne of the heaven).

It is the music of the Mridang (a double-headed, barrel-shaped musical instrument used in Indian classical music) that is emanating from those mansions which reaches the plane and is echoing here.

[Note--Though not explicitly said, the sage's merit that he had accumulated by his austerities and penances could not go in vain inspite of the fact that he had lost his eligibility to acquire the status of Indra. So, when the Apasaras ensnared him in their lustful net, they also crafted a magical underwater play-houses for him where the sage and these damsels could have a nice time enjoying dance and music away from the glare of the outside world. This trick served an important purpose--it saved the sage from public scorn and humiliation as no one would know who lived in those underwater play-houses, and secondly, since the goings-on in these underwater play-houses were not visible from the surface, nor was there any way to learn about the identity of the occupants inside them, it saved the wider community of sages and ascetics from acquiring a general bad name and reputation due to the misadventure and misdemeanour of a single sage, which would have been a very tragic development.]

Verse no. 41:

हविर्भुजामेधवताम्वतुर्णाम् मध्ये ललाटंतपसप्तसप्तिः।

असौ तपस्यत्यपरस्तपस्वी नाम्ना सुतीक्ष्णश्चरितेन दान्तः॥ १३-४१

havirbhujāmedhavatāmcaturnām madhye lalāṭāntapasaptasaptiḥ |
asau tapasyatyaparastapasvī nāmnā sutīkṣṇaścaritena dāntaḥ || 13-41

13-41. As the plane moved ahead, it came over the hermitage of sage Sutikshan¹. Lord Ram told Sita: "See there. The sage sitting amidst the lighted sacrificial fire of four kinds, into which offerings have already been made, is sage Sutikshan. His forehead glows with the radiance of the midday sun, and his penances and austerities have caused a brilliant halo around him. This gives the impression that he is the fifth sacred fire in the middle of the other four sacred fire to complete the picture².

This sage is unique in that though he has such stupendous spiritual powers that he glows like the sun itself, yet he is very calm, cool and comforting unlike the scorching sun.

[Note--¹Lord Ram had met sage Sutikshan prior to meeting sage Agastya on his outward journey to the forest--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 10.

²There are five sacred fires according to the Upanishads and ancient scriptures. These five fires are the following:

According to the *Chandogya Upanishad* of Sam Veda tradition, Canto 4, sections 10 to 13, the five formal divine sacred fires are the following—(a) ‘Garhyapatya’ (the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies), (b) ‘Dakshinagni’ (the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual,

near its south end), (c) 'Ahawaniya' (the fire lit to invoke the Gods, to invite them to participate and accept the offerings made to them during a ritualistic fire sacrifice), (d) 'Sabhya' (the fire of the Vedic period which was continuously lit), and (e) 'Awasathya' (the fire of the later Smriti period). Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 2, section 24, while Canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The Garhyapatya fire—This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these four entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The fire was the central piece of all religious life in early times of the Vedic period when a fire sacrifice was deemed to be the best religious activity that a righteous man can expect to do. In this context, the Garhyapatya fire is the main fire lit during such formal fire sacrifices. The fire pit was either square-shaped or rounded. In the context of the fire sacrifice, it was used for the purpose of daily rituals, cooking or warming the offerings, heating of the vessels, to perform circumambulation, to act as a main cauldron or reservoir of the sacred fire which was to be kept perpetually burning throughout the life of the householder once it was lit.

The Dakshinagni fire—This fire is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

Like in the case of the Garhyapatya fire, the fire that was lit in the main sacrificial shed or site just near the main fire pit but to the south of it and where donations and charities were made was called Dakshinagni fire. The fire pit for this fire was semi-circular or bow-shaped.

The Ahawaniya fire—This fire is lit to invoke the Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possesses most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

According to Vedic tradition, the invitational fire, the Ahawaniya fire that is lit to invite or invoke the Gods, is started from a spark brought from the Garhyapatya fire of the patron who does the fire sacrifice or on whose behalf it is being done. If such a fire is not available with him, then it is brought from some other person's house who

worships the sacred fire on a daily basis. The Dakshinagni is then lit to bear witness to the charities made during the fire sacrifice.

The following are also regarded as the five fires— (i) The Sun, (ii) The Lightning, (iii) The Terrestrial fire, (iv) The Master or Lord of the household, and (v) The Chief Priest.

Scriptures ordain that a learned person should worship the fire element by doing five types of sacrifices in his life. These are called the *Panch Maha Yagya* (the five great religious sacrifices). They are the following—(1) Bhut Yagya refers to taking care of other creatures in creation, such as feeding animals and providing for their protection and shelter. (2) Manushya Yagya refers to doing the same thing for fellow human beings as done for animals and other creatures of this creation. (3) Pitri Yagya refers to offering oblations to dead ancestors and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls. (4) Dev Yagya refers to the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them. (5) And Brahm Yagya refers to the study of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm. These five sacrifices have been described in *Ashramo-panishad*, verse no. 3.

According to the *Pran Agnihotra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12, the five holy fires are the following—Pran, Ahawaniya, Dakshinagni, Garhapatya, and Sarwa-Praaschitya' fires. To quote this Upanishad—"Then the five sacred fires are offered oblations by silently¹ remembering the five Mantras meant for the five types of vital winds, one by one. [This is an important verse because it establishes the link between the five types of Prans, the vital winds, and the five sacred fires.]

So, the first oblation is offered to the first fire represented by the main vital wind called Pran² (breath) by mutely humming the first Mantra (meant for the Pran wind—OM Pranaye Swaha). [Pran is considered as a fire because it is the breath that keeps the body of the creature warm and alive. As soon as one stops to breathe, the body dies.]

The second oblation is offered to the second fire called 'Ahawaniya³' by mutely humming the second Mantra (meant for the Apan wind—OM Apanaye Swaha).

The third oblation is offered to the third fire called 'Dakshinagni⁴' by mutely humming the third Mantra (meant for the Vyan wind—OM Vyanaye Swaha).

The fourth oblation is offered to the fourth fire called 'Garhapatya⁵' by mutely saying the fourth Mantra (meant for the Udaan wind—OM Udanaye Swaha).

The fifth and final oblation is offered to the fifth fire called 'Sarwa-Praaschitya⁶' by mutely saying the fifth Mantra (meant for the Samaan wind—OM Samanaye Swaha). [The Praaschitya fire is the one that is lit as a witness to one's penance, repentance and expiation.] (12).

[Note—¹The Mantras are said in a silent manner or mutely hummed as the worshipper is honouring these sacred fires present symbolically in his own body and not outside in the fire pit of the formal fire sacrifice. These internal fires are symbolically kept burning by the means of the five vital winds which are present inside the body. The Garbho-panishad, paragraph 5 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, also asserts that the body of the living organism is called 'Deha' or body because it harbours the Fire element in it. The body is like the 'fire pit' of a formal fire sacrifice, and the Lord that is worshipped by offering oblations to this fire pit would then obviously be the Atma residing inside this body. This Atma is Brahm personified at the micro level of creation.

The Agni Vidya pertains to the metaphysical knowledge of the various facets of the eternal fire element which is at the root of creation—because any form of life

necessitates the unavoidable presence of energy, heat and light which are the grand and unique virtues possessed intrinsically only by the fire element. No life on earth is tenable and even imaginable without the involvement of the quintessential fire element. The divine fires have been described to Nachiketa by the God of death, Yam, in Kathvalli or Katho-panishad, 1/1/1-20 of Krishna Yajur Veda. They have also been elaborately described in Chandogya Upanishad, canto 4, section 10 to 13 of Sam Veda tradition.

The five holy fires mentioned in this Upanishad are the following—(i) ²*Pran* or breath. This is considered as the ‘fire’ from the practical point of view also as it is to be observed that any fire can be ignited and kept burning only if there is an adequate amount of fresh air; otherwise it would be extinguished and life that depends upon air is suffocated to extinction. It is to be remembered that it is the breath that pumps in air in the body, and if a man is not able to breathe then all the other winds would automatically lose their importance and relevance because no life is sustainable and tenable without fresh air which is here referred to as the ‘Pran’, and therefore death would ensue. So, the breath, the Pran wind, is the most important aspect of life, and as such is a metaphor for ‘fire’ inasmuch as it keeps the body alive, energised, charged and ventilated besides keeping it well oxidised and detoxified. (ii) ³*Ahawaniya* is the fire lit to invoke the Gods and invite them to come and accept the offerings during a ritualistic sacrifice. (iii) ⁴*Dakshinagni* is the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end. (iv) ⁵*Garhyapatya* is the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies. And (v) ⁶*Sarwa-praschitya* Agni—which is the fire standing as a witness to one doing penitence, atonement, expiation and amends for his past errors, misdeeds and sins. This is symbolic way of burning all past sins along with their results, and thereby becoming purified and cleansed.]

Verse no. 42:

अमुम्सहासप्रहितेक्षणानि व्याजार्धसंदर्शितमेखलानि।

नालम्बिकर्तुम्जनितेन्द्रशङ्कम् सुराङ्गनाविभ्रमचेष्टितानि॥ १३-४२

amumsahāsaprahitekṣaṇāni vyājārdhasaṁdarśitamekhalāni |

nālamvikartumjanitendrasaṅkam surāṅganāvibhramaceṣṭitāni || 13-42

13-42. The graceful flirting movements of the celestial maidens sent by Indra, aimed at defiling sage Sutikshan’s austerity and penance - wherein their sidelong glances were darting towards the sage in a mischievous manner, accompanied by provocative and enticing smiles, and their girdles (i.e. the hip and lower waist-line below the belly-button or navel) were purposely exposed partially under some pretext or the other so as to arouse passion in the mind of the sage - were futile as they failed to trap sage Sutikshan who had, due to his practicing strict self-discipline and doing severe penance, had aroused a sense of anxiety, uncertainty and uneasiness in the mind of Indra who thought that the sage was eying his heavenly throne¹. [13-42]

[Note—¹As we have read earlier in verse nos. 38-39 herein above, Indra tried his dirty tricks on sage Sutikshan too. He sent Apasaras to entice the sage so that he falls down from his exalted stature. But unlike sage Shatkarni, sage Sutikshan remained steadfast in his pursuit, and like the blazing midday sun that removes darkness instead of itself falling prey to darkness, the dark designs of these Apasaras failed to darken the sage's heart.

Indra has been infamous for his suspicion and jealousy towards great sages who did penance and sacrifices as he feared that they would use their spiritual powers to snatch his authority as the ruler of heaven. This envy prompted Indra to create some or the other kind of nonsense to disturb the sage and create hurdles in his austerity and penance. He would try all kinds of tricks to break the sage's vow of self-control over senses and passions. He would usually employ his nymphs or young damsels of the heaven's court to go and lure the sage into a honey-trap with their antics and sexually arousing posturing so that the sage breaks his vows of self-discipline and austerity, and falls prey to passions and lust.

More often than not, Indra failed in this nefarious design, and the brunt of the sage's anger was borne first by the poor ladies because the annoyed sage would cast his wrath on them, making them suffer, and when he realised that the main culprit was Indra then the sage would curse Indra too. Thereafter, Indra would plead with Brahma, the grandfather of creation, and other senior gods to intercede on his behalf to seek forgiveness and redemption. Since sages normally had a magnanimous and kind heart, they would usually remit the curse's effect and give some kind of relief.]

Verse no. 43:

एषोऽक्षमालावलयम्मृगाणाम् कण्डूयितारम्कुशसूचिलावम्।

सभाजने मे भुजमूर्ध्वबाहुः सव्येतरम्प्राध्वमितः प्रयुङ्क्ते॥ १३-४३

eṣo'kṣamālāvalayammrgāṇām kaṇḍūyitāramkuśasūcilāvam |
sabhājane me bhujamūrdhvbāhuḥ savyetaramprādhvamitaḥ prayuṅkte ||
13-43

13-43. See, the sage (Sutikshan) is welcoming me by raising his right hand wrapped in a rosary of Rudraksha¹ beads. Since his hand is covered with this rosary which has ragged beads, he can rub the sides of antelopes with it to ease their itchy skin. He also uses his right hand to pluck and prune the kusha grass² for his rituals.

[Note--¹The Rudraksha beads are regarded as very auspicious and symbolise renunciation; they are very favourite of Lord Shiva as well as all ascetics. This bead is the dried seed of the plant *Elaeocarpus ganitrus*, also known as the blueberry tree. It has the word 'rudra' in it, and this word refers to Lord Shiva, and the word 'aksha' which means eye or tears. {Refer—*Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 7, verse no. 8.}

It is believed to have originated from the tears of Lord Shiva. It is said to enhance positive energy, ward off evil, help in spiritual growth, and promote good luck, health and prosperity.

The great spiritual importance and metaphysical significance of the Rudraksha beads have been explained in the *Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad* of the Sam Veda tradition, the *Kalagni Rudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and the *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 7, verse no. 8 of the Atharva Veda tradition.

In the *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 2, Lord Shiva preached sage Jabal Bhusund that a true Brahmin should wear a white Rudraksha bead after taking his morning bath and saying the Rudra Sukta as prayer. It prescribes the number of beads that should be worn on the body as follows—“The worshipper should wear white Rudraksha beads. Forty such beads should be worn on the head in the form of a girdle. On the Shikha (the tuft of hair on the top of the skull), there should be one or three beads. Twelve beads are worn on the ears. Thirty-two beads are worn around the neck as a necklace. Sixteen beads are worn on the upper part (biceps) of each hand. Similarly, twelve beads are worn on each wrist. Six beads are worn on the thumbs (2).’

Origin of Rudraksha—There are two versions regarding the origin of Rudraksha seeds. According to the Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad of Sam Veda, verse no. 2, they were produced as tear drops when Lord Rudra had closed his eyes to meditate before slaying the demon Tripurasur. According to another version given in the Brihajjabal Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Brahman 7, verse no. 8, at the time of doomsday, Lord Rudra had closed his eyes after having annihilated this creation. This is also why it is called ‘Rudraksha’—something that makes one weep, something that has been born from the eyes of Rudra who had mercilessly concluded this creation. Perhaps he had closed his eyes to cool them down, or perhaps he was overwhelmed by the destruction and ruin that unfolded before his eyes that made him wince with regret. Tears must have rolled down from these eyes, and these formed the seeds called the Rudraksha beads. Shiva is an eternally merciful Lord so he must have invariably felt immense regret at having had to carry out this nasty job of burning down everything during the doomsday. But the Lord was duty-bound to do so as a part of the cosmic cycle of destruction and construction mandated by none other than the Supreme Being himself, and Shiva is none other than the latter. In other words, it is Shiva himself who had laid down the laws of creation and conclusion, and so he must adhere to these cosmic laws in order to maintain their sanctity. When the evil and vices in this world go beyond limits, the Lord assumes the ferocious form of Rudra to clean the slate and begin afresh so that those noble and auspicious souls who were about to be crushed by the ascendant evil could be given a chance for living a new life free from fear.

How to wear Rudraksha—This has been described in (i) Sam Veda’s Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad, verse nos. 17-23. (ii) Atharva Veda’s Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 7, verse no. 8; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 2.

²The Kusha grass: It is also known as Durba. Its botanical name is *poa cynosuroides*, and it is a dark green reed used during religious ceremonies and observances.]

Verse no. 44:

वाचंयमत्वात्प्रणतिम्ममैष कम्पेन किञ्चित्प्रतिगृह्य मूर्ध्नः।

दृष्टिंविमानव्यवधानमुक्ताम् पुनः सहस्रार्चिषि संनिधत्ते॥ १३-४४

vācamyamātvātpṛaṇatimamaiṣa kampena kiñcitpratigrhya mūrdhnaḥ |
dr̥ṣṭimvimānavyavadhānamuktām punaḥ sahasrārciṣi saṁnidhatte || 13-44

13-44. {Lord Ram explained to Sita--} This sage observes strict silence, and was deeply engaged in meditation during which he was looking up at the sun (with his closed eyes). So when our plane passed over his hermitage and blocked the sunlight for some moments, the sage wondered at the cause of this sudden blockage of sunlight. To find out the cause, he opened his eyes and then saw my plane in the sky. After he recognised me, he waved his right hand to welcome me, and I reciprocated by bowing before him to pay my respects to him, at which he nodded acknowledgement (with a polite smile).

Now, as our plane has moved ahead and the view of the sun has cleared, he has once again focused his (closed) eyes on the sun.

[Note--It is not practical to look at the blazing disc of the sun with an open eye; it would blind the man. So what actually the sage was doing was that he closed his eyelids and turned his head to face the sun directly overhead. The bright disc of the sun when looked through the closed eyelids appeared like a film of bright orange light covering the eye.]

Verse no. 45:

अदः शरण्यम्शरभङ्गनाम्नः तपोवनम्पावनमाहिताग्नेः।

चिराय संतर्प्य समिद्धिरग्निम् यो मन्त्रपूतामन्तनुमप्यहौषीत्॥ १३-४५

adaḥ śaraṇyamśarabhaṅganāmnāḥ tapovanampāvanamāhitāgneḥ |
cirāya saṁtarpya samidbhiraṅnim yo mantrapūtāmtanumapyahauṣīt || 13-45

13-45. There in the front is the holy hermitage of sage Sarbhanga¹. He was renowned as a sage who would grant protection to those who came to seek refuge with him. He performed fire sacrifices with devotion and diligence. Having satisfied the fire-god by his offerings and purifying himself with Mantras (spiritual formulas), he had finally made the ultimate sacrifice by offering his own body as an offering to the burning sacrificial fire to attain eternal freedom for his soul and deliverance from this mortal and gross world of transmigration.

[Note--¹Lord Ram's meeting with this exalted sage Sarbhanga, and the sage attaining eternal deliverance and salvation for his soul by burning his mortal body in a sacred fire with Lord Ram standing witness has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7-to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9.]

Verse no. 46:

छायाविनीताध्वपरिश्रमेषु भूयिष्ठसंभाव्यफलेष्वमीषु।

तस्यातिथीनामधुनासपर्या स्थिता सुपुत्रेष्विव पादपेषु॥ १३-४६

chāyāvinītādhvapariśrameṣu bhūyiṣṭhasambhāvyaṣvamiṣu |
tasyātithīnāmadhunāsaparyā sthitā supuṭreṣviva pādapeṣu || 13-46

13-46. Just like loyal and faithful sons carry forward the legacy of service for which their father was renowned, so do these large fruit-bearing trees in sage Sarbhanga's hermitage carry on the legacy of service of the legendary sage by providing shade and ripe sweet fruits to travellers who come to take rest under their bowers.

[Note--The trees in the sage's hermitage are likened to faithful sons of a man who had been serving guests all his life. After his death, his sons carry forward their father's legacy by providing service and refreshment to guests and travellers who pass by their home. After the sage passed away, his hermitage did not come to ruin, but it remained lively, green, and flourished with the passage of time. It was due to the sage's spiritual blessings and the a subtle presence of his spirit that helped the hermitage to thrive. It is also possible that some other holy sage or one of the sage's own disciples came to live there to keep his memory and legacy alive. They watered the trees and kept the surroundings clean and vibrant to invite travellers who would like to take rest and seek refreshment.]

Verse no. 47:

धारास्वनोद्गारिदरीमुखोऽसौ शृङ्गाङ्गलग्नम्बुजवप्रपङ्कः।

बध्नाति मे बन्धुरगात्रि चक्षुः दृप्तः ककुद्मानिव चित्रकूटः॥ १३-४७

dhārāsvanodgāridarīmukho'sau śrṅgāṅgalagnāmbujavaprapaṅkaḥ |
badhnāti me bandhuragātri cakṣuḥ dr̥ptaḥ kakudmāniva citrakūṭaḥ || 13-47

13-47. Oh Sita with a beautiful form (bandhuragātri)! There we can see the mountains of Chitrakoot¹. Like a proud bull, it is very robust and attractive with its magnificent natural charm. Its (Chitrakoot's) caves are like the mouth of the bull, the gurgling sound, sometimes of a low pitch and at other times loud, of the many streams cascading down its slopes are like the guttural sound or the loud bellowing of that symbolic bull, its summits and high peaks are the horns of that bull, and the dark clouds that cover the summits of the hills of Chitrakoot are like the dust that has been dug up by this bull while it was digging earth using its horns or while rubbing his horns against the sides of the mountains and hills in a playful mood.

[Note--¹After leaving Ayodhya, it was at Chitrakoot where Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman first put up their hermitage. It was sage Valmiki who had advised the Lord to stay at Chitrakoot. The sage had also briefly described the beauty of the hills of Chitrakoot. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 132-to Doha no. 133. The glory of Chitrakoot has been described in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137-to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.]

Verse no. 48:

एषा प्रसन्नस्तिमितप्रवाहा सरिद्विदूरान्तरभावतन्वी।

मन्दाकिनी भाति नगोपकण्ठे मुक्तावली कण्ठगतेव भूमेः॥ १३-४८

eṣā prasannastimitapravāhā saridvidūrāntarabhāvatanvī |
mandākinī bhāti nagopakāṇṭhe muktāvalī kaṇṭhagateva bhūmeḥ || 13-48

13-48. Come, look below. There is the distance is the magnificent river known as Mankakini¹. Its water is very crystal-clean and flows ever so gently. From a distance up above here, this river looks like a thin ribbon of clean water that forms a girdle around the mountains of Chitrakoot, as if a mother Earth is adorned by a beautiful garland of pearls that has been put around her neck.

[Note--¹Chitrakoot is established on the banks of river Mandakini, and this river is said to be a stream originating from the holy river Ganges, or a tributary of Ganges. It was brought as a stream of the holy river Ganges by Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri, by the powers of her Tapa (penance and austerity) so that sage Atri and other great sages could have the same benefit of living near the holy river Ganges flowing close by their hermitages at Chitrakoot as they would have got if they had their hermitages situated far away at some place near the natural course of river Ganges. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 132.

Refer also to verse no. 51 herein below which also reiterates this fact that river Mandakini was brought to Chitrakoot by Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri.

The story of how river Mandakini came to Chitrakoot briefly is as follows:

Once upon a time there was a severe drought, leading to famine and mass sufferings. Sage Atri felt very sad at this development, and moved by the plight of the world he decided to do Tapa (penance and austerity) in order to alleviate the suffering of all the creatures. In this state, the sage entered into a trance, known as Samadhi, and remained unmoving. His wife Anusuiya was constantly by his side to serve him and take care of him as best as she could. She discarded all food and drink just like her husband had done as he entered into the trance-like state during Tapa.

Highly impressed by the noble cause for which the couple were enduring such hardships and doing Tapa, the Gods, great Sages and the holy river Ganges came to visit them and see their pious efforts. While everyone else paid their obeisance and went their ways, Ganges and Lord Shiva stayed back. The deity representing river Gangs was especially very impressed by Anusuiya's pious nature, noble heart and her devotion to her husband sage Atri, and so the deity thought to herself that if she could in some way help this pious and holy lady it would be a very good deed that she (river Ganges) would be doing.

After a long period of 54 years, sage Atri woke up from his meditative state (i.e. from Samadhi), and asked his wife, Anusuiya, to give him some water to drink. Anusuiya took the sage's water-pot and went out in search of water, wondering from where to fetch some water for the sage. {Remember: there was a prolonged drought.}

The deity of river Ganges decided that it was the most appropriate time to help Anusuiya. So, she revealed herself in a physical form before the hermitress and told her that she (Ganges) was very please by her penances and austerities, and wished to know how she could be helped. Anusuiya asked for some water, at which the personified form of the deity of river Ganges asked the hermitress to dig a small pit in the ground. When it was done, the deity entered it, and transformed herself into water.

Anusuiya filled her pot with that water and requested the deity to remain there till she goes and gives the water to sage Atri, and then bring him to that place. When sage Atri drank this water, he was astonished by its nectarine qualities, sweet, cool and rejuvenating. When asked, Anusuiya told Atri everything. The sage then came to visit the sacred spot where the holy river Ganges had revealed herself.

Seeing the hole from where Anusuiya had fetched water for him, sage Atri recognized it was river Ganges; he paid his obeisance to the holy river and asked the latter not to leave that place, and stay there forever. River Ganges replied that if the

sage would offer the good effects of his doing worship of Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati (Shiva's consort) for merely one year to river Ganges in exchange of her living there, she would oblige him. The sage agreed. And in this way, river Ganges came to be present in that spot for all times to come, and became known as 'Mandakini'. This episode also shows the stupendous spiritual rewards one gets by worshipping Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati in as much as merely one year's rewards compelled river Ganges to stay put and entitled her to purify a place which had never seen water before. {This story is narrated in Shiva Puran, Canto 4, in its Rudra Sanhita.}]

Verse no. 49:

**अयम्सुजातोऽनुगिरमन्तमालः प्रवालमादाय सुगन्धि यस्य।
यवाङ्कुरापाण्डुकपोलशोभी मयावतंसः परिकल्पितस्ते॥ १३-४९**

ayamsujāto'nugiramtamālaḥ pravālamādāya sugandhi yasya |
yavāṅkurāpāṇḍukapolaśobhī mayāvataṁsaḥ parikalpitaste || 13-49

13-49. That tree called Tamal (an evergreen tree known as Indian Bay leaf tree, or Cinnamomum tamala tree; its leaves are also called Tejpatta) that you descry near the main summit of Chitrakoot is the one whose leaves I would pluck and craft it into an earring which I would then put around your ears. When it dangled on the glowing skin of your cheeks and the sides of your neck, its olive-green colour with some brownish spots looked very radiant and charming as if new sprouts of barley are seen against the backdrop of evergreen verdant fields.

Verse no. 50:

**अनिग्रहत्रासविनीतसत्त्व मपुष्पलिङ्गात्फलबन्धिवृक्षम्।
वनमत्पःसाधनमेतदत्रेः आविष्कृतोदग्रतरप्रभावम्॥ १३-५०**

anigrahatrāsavinītasattva mapuṣṣpaliṅgātphalabandhivṛkṣam |
vanamtapahṣāadhanametadatrehḥ āviṣkṛtodaḡrataraḥprabhāvam || 13-50

13-50. There in front is the holy hermitage of sage Atri¹. Even lions and other naturally violent animals have become tamed and calm without use of any force; these animals roam around peacefully without harming or hurting anyone. This hermitage is so blessed that the trees bear fruits without waiting for the formal botanical process of first having flowers and then bearing fruits. {To wit, fruits are available round the year irrespective of the season or month of the year. This is possible because of the great spiritual powers of sage Atri.}

[Note--¹Lord Ram visited sage Atri, and his wife Anusuiya had blessed Sita, during the Lord's outbound journey to the forest--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3-to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

Verse no. 51:

अत्राभिषेकाय तपोधनानाम् सप्तर्षिहस्तोद्धतहेमपद्माम्।

प्रवर्तयामास किलानसूया त्रिस्रोतसम्त्र्यम्बकमौलिमालाम्॥ १३-५१

atrābhiṣekāya tapodhanānām saptarṣihastoddhrtahemapadmām |
pravartayāmāsa kilānasūyā trisrotasamtryambakamaulimālām || 13-51

13-51. Sage Atri's wife Anusuyia has brought the holy river Ganges that is so majestic that it traverses by three paths (and hence called 'Tri-path Gamini', i.e. one that flows by three channels)¹. She brought it here in the form of a single stream (known as Mandakini) so that the sage himself as well as other great sages living nearby could bathe in its holy and purifying waters. The seven celestial sages, known as the 'saptarishis'², themselves pluck golden-coloured lotus flowers from this river (i.e. river Ganges and its branch Mandakini) to be offered to Lord Shiva. The river itself adorns the head of Lord Shiva like a garland because it wraps itself around his the thick crown of matted hairs that the Lord wears on his head.

[Note--¹River Ganges is called 'Tri-path Gamini', i.e. the river flowing through three channels or paths--heaven (known as Akash Ganga), earth (known as Bhu-Ganga), and subterranean path (known as Patal Ganga).

Briefly, the story of river flowing through three paths or channels is as follows: Originally it flowed in the heaven. Then king Bhagirath brought it down to earth to perform the last rites of his ancestors. And finally, Bhagirath led it to the netherworld or the subterranean world to liberate the souls of the 60,000 sons of king Sagar who lay buried there.

²The Sapta Rishis or the seven sages had exceptional spiritual powers, more than any other sage of the time. They are the following—Kashyap, Atri, Jamdagni, Vishwamitra, Vashistha, Bharadwaj and Gautam.]

Verse no. 52:

वीरासनैर्ध्यानजुषामृषीणाम् अमी समध्यासितवेदिमध्याः।

निवातनिष्कम्पतया विभान्ति योगाधिख्ढा इव शाखिनोऽपि॥ १३-५२

vīrāsanaīrdhyānajuṣāmṛṣīṇām amī samadhyāsītavedimadhyāḥ |
nivātaniṣkampatayā vibhānti yogādhirūḍhā iva śākhino'pi || 13-52

13-52. In this holy hermitage, there are a number of raised platforms under the shade of trees. On these platforms, ascetics and sages do meditation by sitting motionless. Even the surrounding trees stand still in the absence of a breeze as if they too are meditating. In brief, the whole environment of this place is infused with a spiritual aura or atmosphere of piety where every entity, be it a sage or ascetic, a tree or even the surrounding air, seems motionless as if engrossed in deep meditation. {Its a quiet and calm place, with no noise and disturbance of any kind. Such an environment is crucial for meditation.}

Verse no. 53:

त्वया पुरस्तादुपयाचितो यः सोऽयम्बटः श्याम इति प्रतीतः।

राशिर्मणीनामिव गारुडानाम् सपद्मरागः फलितो विभाति॥ १३-५३

tvayā purastādupayācīto yaḥ so'yamvataḥ śyāma iti pratītaḥ |
rāśīrmaṇīnāmiva gāruḍānām sapadmarāgaḥ phalito vibhāti || 13-53

13-53. That dark coloured Vat-Tree (i.e. banyan tree), known as the 'Shyam-tree' because of its dark colour, is the one where you had made a wish¹. With its dark body and red-coloured fruits it gives the impression that many rubies are scattered at random on a heap of emeralds².

[Note--¹During the outbound journey to the forest, Sita had made a wish near this wish-fulfilling tree. She had sought a blessing from it that they, i.e. Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman, could complete their forest exile successfully and come back home safely.

²In this analogy, the dark Vat-tree is likened to a heap of emeralds, and its red-coloured fruits to rubies that are scattered in that heap. We must remember that presently Lord Ram is looking down on this Vat-tree from high above while cruising in the air-plane. So therefore, the tree appears as a large heap of some dark emeralds, with its fruits as red coloured rubies mixed randomly in that heap.]

Verse nos. 54-57:

{In the following verse nos. 54-57, the poet describes the confluence of river Ganga and river Yamuna--i.e. the holy site called Prayag which the Lord visited enroute to the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 105-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 106.}

क्वचित्प्रभालेपिभिरिन्द्रनीलैः मुक्तामयी यष्टिरिवानुविद्धा।

अन्यत्र माला सितपङ्कजानाम् इन्दीवरैरुत्खचितान्तरेव॥ १३-५४

क्वचित्खगानाम्प्रियमानसानाम् कादम्बसंसर्गवतीव पङ्क्तिः।

अन्यत्र कालागुरुदत्तापत्रा भक्तिर्भुवश्चन्दनकल्पितेव॥ १३-५५

क्वचित्प्रभा चान्द्रमसी तमोभिश्छायाविलीनैः शबलीकृतेव।

अन्यत्र शुभ्रा शरदभलेखा रन्ध्रेष्विवालक्ष्यनभःप्रदेशा॥ १३-५६

क्वचिच्च कृष्णोरगभूषणेव भस्माङ्गरागा तनुरीश्वरस्य।

पश्यानवद्याङ्गि विभाति गङ्गा भिन्नप्रवाहा यमुनातरङ्गैः॥ १३-५७

kvacitprabhālepipibhirindranīlaiḥ muktāmayī yaṣṭirivānuviddhā |
anyatra mālā sitapaṅkajānām indīvarairutkhacitāntareva || 13-54

kvacitkhagānāmpriyamānasānām kādambasamsargavatīva pañktiḥ |
anyatra kālāgurudatāpatrā bhaktirbhuvaścandanakalpīteva || 13-55

kvacitprabhā cāndramasī tamobhiśchāyāvilīnaiḥ śabalīkṛteva |
anyatra śubhrā śaradabhralekhā randhreṣvivālakṣyanabhaḥpradeśā || 13-56

kvacicca kṛṣṇoragabhūṣaṇeva bhasmāṅgarāgā tanurīśvarasya |
paśyānavadyāṅgi vibhāti gaṅgā bhinnapravāhā yamunātaraṅgaiḥ || 13-57

13-54, 55, 56, 57. Oh Sita! Mark, how beautiful is the scene where the dark coloured water of river Yamuna meets the waves of whitish foaming waters of river Ganges. They present a fascinating sight when beheld together.

Sometimes it looks like as if they are like a necklace threaded together by using pearls and emeralds (representing Ganges and Yamuna respectively), and at other times they look like a garland made by a combination of light blue and dark blue (i.e. grey and pink) coloured lotus flowers (Ganges and Yamuna respectively).

At some places they appear like a flock of swans with dark wings (Yamuna), and at other places these swans assume a whitish colour (Ganges), and at some other places it appears that these two types of swans are flying together (i.e. at places where the waters of the two rivers mix with each other to flow together).

At some places it looks as if white sandal paste (representing Ganges) has been used to decorate the earth, and paste of black aloe (representing Yamuna) has been used to make floral designs on its surface to enhance its beauty.

At some spots it looks like the smooth moonlight (representing Ganges) covering the surface of the earth has been interrupted at places by the dark shadows of trees and their leaves (representing Yamuna) that create dark patches here and there.

At other spots it appears like a streak of white clouds of autumn (representing Ganges) through which the stark colour of the azure blue sky (representing Yamuna) is visible due to some gap in the clouds.

While at some other places it appears as if the body of Lord Shiva has been smeared with white ash (representing Ganges), and decorated by black serpents that are wrapped around it (representing Yamuna).

In this way, the communion of Ganges with Yamuna presents a very fascinating and charming view.

Verse no. 58:

समुद्रपत्योर्जलसंनिपाते पूतात्मनामत्र किलाभिषेकात्।
तत्त्वावबोधेन विनापि भूयः तनुत्यजाम्नास्ति शरीरबन्धः॥ १३-५८

samudrapatyorjalasamnīpāte pūtātmanāmatra kilābhiṣekāt |
tattvāvabodhena vināpi bhūyaḥ tanutyajāmnāsti śarīrabandhaḥ || 13-58

13-58. Those who take a holy bath in this confluence of the two holy rivers Ganges and Yamuna find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration in this mortal gross world, even though they may not have had any spiritual knowledge or done any penance or austerity worth the name that are otherwise a necessary criterion for attaining emancipation and salvation of the soul.

{To wit, even an ordinary person who may not have any great knowledge of metaphysics and spiritualism, who has not done Tapa (penance, austerity), Dhyan (meditation), Yagya (sacrifices), Daan (charities), Tirtha (pilgrimage) or other such spiritual practices, can easily attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation for his or her soul by taking a bath in the confluence of these two holy rivers at Prayag. All their wishes are fulfilled, and all their cherished dreams are realised this easy way. The glories of this place where the two holy rivers meet are beyond imagination. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 105 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}

Verse no. 59:

**पुरम्लिषादाधिपतेरिदमन्तत् यस्मिन्मया मौलिमणिम्विहाय।
जटासु बद्धास्वरुदत्सुमन्त्रः कैकेयि कामाः फलितास्तवेति॥ १३-५९**

puramniṣādādhipateridamtat yasminmayā maulimaṇimvihāya |
jaṭāsu baddhāsvarudatsumantraḥ kaikeyi kāmāḥ phalitāstaveti || 13-59

13-59. There in the yonder is the city of Sringeripur, the capital of Nishad, the head of the boatmen community¹. It is the place where I had discarded my princely crown and replaced it by a crown of matted hairs by knitting my long hairs together into a thick plait and wrapping it over my head like done by ascetics. Our royal charioteer Sumantra had wept bitterly when he watched me doing so².

[Note--¹Lord Ram had met Nishadraj at Sringeripur. Nishad had warmly welcomed the Lord, and a bond of friendship was forged immediately between them as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 87- to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Nishad had accompanied Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman till Chitrakoot from where he was asked by the Lord to return home. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 142-- wherein it is stated that Nishad returned home after the Lord settled down in his first hermitage at Chitrakoot.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 94.]

Verse no. 60:

{Verse nos. 60 to 63, like the previous verse nos. 54 to 57, once again form a group of four verses closely related to each other. But in the present case, they are segregated for reading convenience.}

**पयोधरैः पुण्यजनाङ्गनानाम्निर्विष्टहेमाम्बुजरेणु यस्याः।
ब्राह्ममसरः कारणमाप्तवाचो बुद्धेरिवव्यक्तमुदाहरन्ति॥ १३-६०**

payodharaiḥ puṇyajanāṅganānāmniṛviṣṭahemāmbujareṇu yasyāḥ |
brāhmamsaraḥ kāraṇamāptavāco buddherivāvyaktamudāharanti || 13-60

13-60. Learned sages assert that knowledge of all kind (which is a subtle thing with no physical forms and boundaries, but its existence is nevertheless undisputed) has come from the creator Brahma (who is also invisible but his existence cannot be challenged as it is he who had created this world, including the Vedas which are repositories of all knowledge).

Likewise, they also assert that river Saryu (that flanks the city of Ayodhya) has its origin in lake Mansarovar said to be created by Brahma himself. {In physical terms, Mansarovar lake is located in the upper reaches of the Himalayas. River Saryu is said to have originated from this lake.}

The female Yakshas (a sort of demi-god or spirit usually regarded as benign and helpful) apply the nectar obtained from the golden lotuses found in this Mansarovar lake as an ointment that they rub on their bosoms.

Verse no. 61:

**जलानि या तीरनिखातयूपा वहत्ययोध्यामनु राजधानीम्।
तुरंगमेधावभृथावतीर्णैः इक्ष्वाकुभिः पुण्यतरीकृतानि ॥ १३-६१**

jalāni yā tīranikhātayūpā vahatyayodhyāmanu rājadhānīm |
turaṅgamedhāvabhṛthāvatīrṇaiḥ ikṣvākubhiḥ puṇyatarīkṛtāni || 13-61

13-61. This city of Ayodhya, which is the ancient capital of the kings of the Ikshwaku race, is situated on the banks of this river Saryu which flows on its northern flanks. On its banks many sacrificial posts have been erected where religious sacrifices used to be routinely conducted in the past, and are still conducted. Its water is deemed to be purifying and holy because kings of the Solar Race used to take a bath in it to purify themselves after successfully completing their Aswamedha Yagya (the horse sacrifice).

Verse no. 62:

**याम्सैकतोत्सङ्गसुखोचितानाम् प्राज्यैः पयोभिः परिवर्धितानाम्।
सामान्यधात्रीमिव मानसम्मे संभावयत्युत्तरकोसलानाम् ॥ १३-६२**

yāmsaikatotsaṅgasukhacitānām prājyaiḥ payobhiḥ parivardhitānām |
sāmānyadhātrīmiva mānasamme sambhāvayatyuttarakosalānām || 13-62

13-62. I (Lord Ram) have great respect for this river (Saryu) because it is like a nurse that has taken care of and sustained the great rulers of the kingdom of Kaushal. All of them play around its sandy banks, and they grow up drinking its sweet water which nurtures them.

Verse no. 63:

**सेयम्मदीया जननीव तेन मान्येन राज्या सरयूर्वियुक्ता।
दूरे वसन्तम्शिशिरानिलैर्माम् तरंगहस्तैरुपगूहतीव ॥ १३-६३**

seyammadiyā jananiṁva tena mānyena rājñyā sarayūrviyuktā |
dūre vasantamśīrānilairmām taramgahastairupagūhatīva || 13-63

13-63. Like my dear mother (Kaushalya), who has been separated from my revered father king Dashrath (because he has died), would raise her loving arms to welcome and embrace me whenever she saw me, the waves of cool water of river Saryu also seem to rise up to welcome and embrace me when it cited my plane in the sky.

Verse no. 64:

विरक्तसंध्याकपिशम्परस्तात् यतो रजः पार्थिवमुज्जिहीते।
शङ्के हनूमत्कथितप्रवृत्तिः प्रत्युद्गतो माम्भरतः ससैन्यः॥ १३-६४

viraktasāṁdhyākapiśamparastāt yato rajaḥ pāṛthivamujjihīte |
śaṅke hanūmatkathitapravṛttiḥ pratyudgato māmbharataḥ sasainyaḥ || 13-64

13-64. Look down below. A cloud of brown-coloured dust is rising up from the ground. It seems to me that after Hanuman had informed Bharat that I have come back¹, he (Bharat) is coming forward to welcome me along with a large company consisting of citizens, courtiers and army.

[Note--¹Lord Ram had sent Hanuman in advance to inform Bharat about his return. As soon as Bharat got this good news, he informed everyone in the city. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 121; and (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 1-to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 3.}

At that time Bharat was staying in Nandigram on the outskirts of Ayodhya. So a large number of people gathered and came from the city to join Bharat when he welcomed Lord Ram in Nandigram. The dust was kicked up by the movement of these people from the city of Ayodhya to the outskirts at Nandigram.]

Verse no. 65:

अद्धा श्रियम्पालितसंगराय प्रत्यर्पयिष्यत्यनघाम्स साधुः।
हत्वा निवृत्ताय मृधे खरादीन् संरक्षिताम्वामिव लक्ष्मणो मे॥ १३-६५

addhā śriyampālitasamgarāya pratyarpayīṣyatyanaghāmsa sādhuḥ |
hatvā nivṛttāya mṛdhe kharādīn samrakṣitāmtvāmiva lakṣmaṇo me || 13-65

13-65. When I had to engage the demons Khar, Dushan etc. at Panchvati, I had entrusted your safety to Laxman while I tackled them. After I had finished the job, Laxman had handed your custody safely back to me¹.

In the same way, Bharat now is getting ready to safely return the crown of Ayodhya to me which I had earlier kept in his safe custody for the period of my forest sojourn².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede Doha no. 18; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 21.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 313 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that follow it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 316; and (iii) Doha no. 323 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.]

Verse no. 66:

असौ पुरस्कृत्य गुरुम्पदातिः पश्चादवस्थापितवाहिनीकः।
वृद्धैरमात्यैः सह चीरवासा मामर्घ्यपाणिर्भरतोऽप्युपैति॥ १३-६६

asau puraskṛtya gurumpadātiḥ paścādavasthāpitavāhinīkaḥ |
vṛddhairamātyaiḥ saha cīravāsā māmarghyapāṇirbharato'pyupaiti || 13-66

13-66. {Addressing Sita, Lord Ram tells her with cheer in his heart.} "Look! There is Bharat wearing ochre clothes of an ascetic. He is coming on foot, holding a platter full of auspicious herbs and other paraphernalia needed to welcome me. He is accompanied by elderly ministers and courtiers, and behind them is a large detachment of the army. Sage Vashistha is leading this procession from the front.

Verse no. 67:

पित्रा विसृष्टाम्मदपेक्षया यः श्रियम्युवाप्यङ्कगतामभोक्ता।
इयन्ति वर्षाणि तया सहोग्रम् अभ्यस्यतीव व्रतमासिधारम्॥ १३-६७

pitṛā viśṛṣṭāmmadapekṣayā yaḥ śriyamyuvāpyaṅkagatāmabhoktā |
iyanti varṣāṇi tayā sahogram abhyasyatīva vratamāsidhāram || 13-67

13-67. Just like the case of a young man exercising exemplary self-control over his natural instincts of sexual enjoyments by paying no attention to a young and beautiful damsel who comes to sit on his lap with lustful desire for sexual gratification, which is a temptation too powerful to resist, and if successfully done will be equivalent to walking barefoot on the sharp edge of a sword, so likewise in a similar way did Bharat resist the overwhelming temptation of enjoying the comforts, pleasures and powers that come to a person naturally with the kingship of a mighty and prosperous kingdom such as that of Ayodhya, and instead he led a life of renunciation like that of a hermit for the entire period of fourteen years of my forest exile to honour the wish of our father."

Verse no. 68:

एतावदुक्तवति दाशरथौ तदीया मिच्छाम्बिमानमधिदेवतया विदित्वा।
ज्योतिष्पथादवततार सविस्मयाभि रुद्वीक्षितम्प्रकृतिभिर्भरतानुगाभिः॥ १३-६८

etāvaduktavati dāśarathau tadyā micchāmbimānamadhidevatayā veditvā |
jyotiṣpathādavatatāra savismayābhi rudvīkṣitamprakṛtibhirbharatānugābhiḥ || 13-68

13-68. When Lord Ram told Sita about Bharat coming to meet him, the sensors aboard the Pushpak plane, which could sense the chief patron's wishes, got the hint--that Lord Ram wants to meet Bharat, the plane automatically descended on the ground and landed in front of the approaching procession. This development left everyone on the ground, Bharat, the ministers, the army, and the rest of the senior citizens, amazed.

{It is probably because none of them had ever seen such a wonderful flying machine earlier in their lives. And to add to their astonishment, they could see Lord Ram and Sita seated on a raised platform on the plane, with Laxman standing by his side along with a large number of other guests, the chief commanders of the Lord's army who had accompanied him from Lanka. The citizens had never seen any of these guests, some with the form of monkeys and bears, and others, such as Vibhishan, having bodies of a demon. This sight was beyond imagination of the people of Ayodhya who had seen Lord Ram walking on foot to the forest. They were full of wonder and awe at seeing the Lord sitting on a majestic plane surrounded by so many strangers.}

Verse no. 69:

**तस्मात्पुरःसरबिभीषणदर्शनेन सेवाविचक्षणहरीश्वरदत्तहस्तः।
यानादवातरददूरमहीतलेन मार्गेण भङ्गिरचितस्फटिकेन रामः॥ १३-६९**

tasmātpuraḥsarabibhīṣaṇadarśanena sevāvicakṣaṇaharīśvaradattahastah |
yānādavātaradadūramahītalena mārgēṇa bhaṅgiracitasphaṭikena rāmah ||
13-69

13-69. As the plane touched the ground, Lord Ram held the hand of Sugriv, who was ever-ready to serve the Lord, to take support while coming down the quartz-studded stairs of the plane. Vibhishan walked a step ahead on one side of the Lord to escort him forward to meet Bharat.

Verse no. 70:

**इक्ष्वाकुवंशगुरवे प्रयतः प्रणम्य स भ्रातरम्भरतमर्घ्यपरिग्रहान्ते।
पर्यश्रुस्वजत मूर्धनि चोपजघ्नौ तद्भक्त्यपोदपितृराज्यमहाभिषेके॥ १३-७०**

ikṣvākuvamśagurave prayataḥ praṇamya sa
bhrātarambharatamarghyaparigrahānte |
paryaśrurasvajata mūrdhani copajaghrau
tadbhaktyapodhapitrārajyamahābhiṣeke || 13-70

13-70. When the plane landed, Lord Ram got off it, and he reverentially bowed before sage Vashistha who was the chief priest and preceptor of the kings of the Ikshawaku race. Then Lord Ram sipped some sanctified water and, with tears in his eyes, he affectionately embraced Bharat and smelled (or kissed) his forehead which had rejected the crown of the kingdom out of love for the Lord.

[Note--Lord Ram showed his great appreciation for Bharat's devotion and dedication to him, and his decision to reject the crown and its associated benefits because of this

devotion for the Lord, by first affectionately embracing Bharat, and then kissing him on his forehead--because it is the head on which a person wears the crown.]

Verse no. 71:

श्मश्रुप्रवृद्धिजनिताननविक्रियांश्च प्लक्षान्प्ररोहजटिलानिव मन्त्रिवृद्धान्।
अन्वग्रहीत्प्रणमतः शुभदृष्टिपातैर्वीतानुयोगमधुराक्षरया च वाचा॥ १३-७१

śmaśrupravṛddhijanitānanavikriyāṁśca
plakṣānprarohajaṭilāniva mantrivṛddhān |
anvagrahītpṛaṇamataḥ śubhadṛṣṭipātai
rvātānuyogamadhurākṣarayā ca vācā || 13-71

13-71. After that, Lord Ram met the elderly ministers and courtiers who had come to welcome him home. The Lord spoke with them in a sweet voice and tears in his eyes while asking them about their welfare. Since Lord Ram had long matted hairs and a flowing beard, he looked like a banyan tree with thick branches that are covered with a dense foliage.

Verse no. 72:

दुर्जातबन्धुरयमृक्षहरीश्वरो मे पौलस्त्य एष समरेषु पुरःप्रहर्ता।
इत्यादृतेन कथितौ रघुनन्दनेन व्युत्क्रम्य लक्ष्मणमुभौ भरतो ववन्दे॥ १३-७२

durjātabandhurayamṛkṣaharīśvaro me
paulastya eṣa samareṣu puraḥprahartā |
ityādr̥tena kathitau raghunandanena
vyutkrāmy lakṣmaṇamubhau bharato vavande || 13-72

13-72. Lord Ram then introduced his companions to Bharat. Introducing Sugriv, the Lord told Bharat: "He is the king of monkeys and bears. He had been very helpful to me during my difficult times."

Then, introduction Vibhishan, the Lord said: "His name is Vibhishan, and he is born in the race of the sage Pulastya. During the war (of Lanka to free Sita), he took the ground and attacked the enemy before we could, fighting the enemy from the front."

When Bharat came to know about them, he bowed before them to show his respect, even before he met Laxman.

Verse no. 73:

सौमित्रिणा तदनु संसृजे स चैन मुत्थाप्य नम्रशिरसम्भृशमालिलिङ्ग।
रूढेन्द्रजित्प्रहरणव्रणकर्कशेन क्लिश्यन्निवास्य भुजमध्यमुरस्थलेन॥ १३-७३

saumitriṇā tadanu saṁsasrje sa caina
mutthāpya namraśirasambhṛśamālilīṅga |

rūḍhendrajitpraharaṇavraṇakarkaśena
kliśyannivāsyā bhujamadhyamurasthalena || 13-73

13-73. After that, Bharat met Laxman who was bowing before him respectfully. Bharat lifted his bowed head and affectionately embraced him by claspings Laxman, whose chest had many sores caused by the wounds made by the weapons of Meghanad, tightly to his bosom.

Verse no. 74:

रामाज्यया हरिचमूपतयस्तदानीम् कृत्वा मनुष्यवपुरारुरुहर्गजेन्द्रान्।
तेषु क्षरत्सु बहुधा मदवारिधाराः शैलाधिरोहणसुखान्युपलेभिरेते॥ १३-७४

rāmājñyayā haricamūpatayastadānīm
kṛtvā manuṣyavapurārururhurgajendrān |
teṣu kṣaratsu bahudhā madavāridhārāḥ
śailādhirohaṇasukhānyupalebhirete || 13-74

13-74. On the instructions of Lord Ram, his companions who came with him on the plane, i.e. the chieftains of the monkeys and bears (such as Sugriv and Angad representing the monkeys, and Jamvant representing the bears), assumed the form of humans¹.

Then they were requested to ride atop elephants, from whose foreheads ichors were seeping out², for their journey to the city of Ayodhya³. They used the trunks of these elephants to get up on their backs as was their natural habit from their days in the forest where they would climb on the branches and trunks of trees to reach the top.

Now, since ichor was seeping out from the foreheads of these elephants and dripping around their temples and trunks, these monkey companions of Lord Ram felt the same pleasure while climbing up the elephants' trunks as they would get when they would rise up the sides of hills and mountains on which water-falls were sliding down from the top, drenching them with cool water and making them very playful.

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 8.

²Ichor of an elephant: It is a scented viscous liquid or sap that effuses out from the forehead of adult male elephants, specially in their rut season. An elephant from whom the ichor is seeping out is considered very healthy and in the prime of his age. This sap flows from the forehead and drips down the temples of the elephant.

³The party that come from the city to receive Lord Ram had brought along elephants and chariots for the Lord's ride back to the city from its outskirts in Nandigram where the plane landed. We shall soon read in the verses that follow herein below that Lord Ram asked his companions, who by now had assumed human forms, to get on the elephants and chariots for their ride into the city, while he himself got back on the plane along with Bharat, Laxman and Sita to enter the city via the air route.

Though it is nowhere mentioned how Shatrughan, the younger brother of Bharat, went back, whether he had accompanied the Lord on the plane, or if he had led the procession on the ground back into the city, but in all probability he was

allowed to stay on the ground to escort Lord Ram's companions from Lanka as they moved to the city of Ayodhya as a mark of etiquette and observance of protocol for guests.]

Verse no. 75:

**सानुप्लवः प्रभुरपि क्षणदाचराणाम् भेजे रथान्दशरथप्रभवानुशिष्टः।
मायाविकल्परचितैरपि ये तदीयैर्न स्यन्दनैस्तुलितकृत्रिमभक्तिशोभाः॥ १३-७५**

sānuplavaḥ prabhurapi kṣaṇadācarāṇām bheje
rathāndaśarathaprabhavānuśiṣṭaḥ |
māyāvikalparacitairapi ye tadīyai
rna syandanaistulitakṛtrimabhaktiśobhāḥ || 13-75

13-75. On the instructions of Lord Ram, Vibhishan and his companions got atop the many chariots brought there. These chariots, though made by humans, yet were so magnificent and luxurious that they surpassed the beauty and the charm of the chariots that skilled craftsmen of the demon race could ever make. {To wit, the chariots of Lanka, which Vibhishan was accustomed to ride, seemed ramshackle, makeshift vehicles when compared to the wonderfully crafted chariots of Ayodhya.}

[Note--Vibhishan was the prince of the demon race of Lanka. The demons were skilled in the art of magic and creating things so wonderful, bearing an out-of-world look, that would be unimaginable for ordinary human beings to make or even replicate. So, when Vibhishan saw the magnificent chariots of Ayodhya, he was spellbound by their beauty and luxurious interiors.]

Verse no. 76:

**भूयस्ततो रघुपतिर्विलसत्पताक मध्यास्त कामगति सावरजो विमानम्।
दोषातनम्बुधबृहस्पतियोगदृश्य स्तारापतिस्तरलविद्युदिवाभवृन्दम्॥ १३-७६**

bhūyastato raghupatirvilasatpatāka madhyāsta kāmagati sāvarajo vimānam |
doṣātanambudhabṛhaspatiyogadr̥śya stārāpatistaralavidyudivābhavṛndam ||
13-76

13-76. Thence, along with his two brothers Laxman and Bharat, Lord Ram got on the Pushpak plane which was adorned by banners and flags, and which had the unique ability to move in accordance with the wish of its chief patron, in the same way as the full Moon that adorns the evening sky sitting atop silvery clouds, and flanked by the planets Budha and Brihaspati (i.e. Mercury and Jupiter respectively)¹.

[Note--¹The planet Budha or Mercury represents intelligence, knowledge, logic and communication. According to mythology, Budha is the son of the Moon-God and his consort Tara (meaning stars that surround the moon).

Brihaspati or Jupiter is the guru or preceptor, teacher and advisor of the gods. He is also known for his wisdom, intelligence and far-sightedness. He is the guide of the gods, and the lord of knowledge and eloquence. He is an embodiment of the

virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness and divine rule. He is the patron god of wisdom, sagacity and erudition as well as of speech (Shathpath Brahman, 14/4/1/22). He is first mentioned in the Rig Veda, 1/139/10; 1/190.

Both Bharat and Laxman possessed these characters, and Lord Ram loved them and treated them as if they were his sons. Bharat possessed all the virtues of Brishaspati, while Laxman represented Budha.]

Verse no. 77:

तत्रेश्वरेण जगताम्प्रलयादिवोर्वी वर्षात्ययेन रुचमभ्रघनादिवेन्दोः।

रामेण मैथिलसुतामदशकण्ठकृच्छ्रा त्प्रत्युद्धतामधृतिमतीम्भरतो ववन्दे॥ १३-७७

tatreśvareṇa jagatāmpralayādivorvīm
varṣātyayena rucamabhraghanādivendoḥ |
rāmeṇa maithilasutāmdaśakaṇṭhakṛcchrā
tpratyuddhṛtām dhr̥timatīmbharato vavande || 13-77

13-77. When Bharat boarded the Pushpak plane, he bowed his head before Sita¹ whose glory, holiness and immaculate character were patiently and resolutely protected by Lord Ram from being tarnished by the demon king Ravana, and were restored fully in the same way as Adi-Varaha (the ancient Boar) had salvaged the earth from getting drowned during the doomsday deluge, and the autumn season that makes the moonlight shine through after it was marred by thick dark clouds of the previous rainy season².

[Note--¹This verse clearly shows that Sita had remained on board the plane when it touched down on the ground, and Lord Ram and others stepped down from it to meet Bharat and others who had come to receive the Lord.

²In this analogy, Lord Ram is the Adi-Varaha, Sita is the earth, and Ravana is the doomsday deluge that had almost drowned the earth and ruined it if had not been salvaged by the Adi-Varaha.

Again, just like the beautiful moonlight shines on the earth through the clear sky of autumn after the dark clouds of the rainy season had all but marred its brilliance, so likewise Lord Ram had restored the dignity, glory, beauty and charm of Sita after what seemed to be a period of gloom and despair for her.

The story of Adi-Varaha, or the ancient Boar, in brief is this: It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the ocean where it had vanished. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, Book III, Chapter 13, 18 and 19. In brief it is as follows:

In the beginning of creation, Lord Brahma, the creator, produced Manu and Satrupa, the first male and female. The couple asked the creator to tell them what they are expected to do, at which Brahma told them to start the process of procreation and spread their off-springs on the ground, thereby propagating the human race. Manu was left flummoxed as he did not see any land to carry out his mandate. It was because the demon Hiranyaaksha had hidden it under water of the celestial ocean (or in the void of the nether world ruled by the demons).

Finding no land to stand upon and start the process of procreation, Manu complained to Brahma; the latter meditated and discovered the reason for the earth's disappearance. Brahma then appealed to Lord Vishnu, the 'sustainer and protector of this creation, and the second god of the Trinity'. Immediately, a Vishnu manifested himself as a tiny 'Boar', the size of a thumb, which grew in size to assume a phenomenal dimension. The Boar dug up the earth from where it was concealed, held it secure on its tusks and revealed it for Brahma.

Meanwhile, when the demon Hiranyaaksha came to know of it, he faced Lord Boar with his gigantic mace and challenged the latter for a duel. In the battle that followed, Lord Vishnu, disguised as a Boar, slayed the demon and finally set the earth free from his clutches.

An interesting development played out in the meantime. The rescued earth itself needed somewhere to be kept. It was like a huge 'ball'. So, the Boar placed it on the surface of the celestial ocean from underneath of which it was rescued, and by his mystical powers made it float on it like a buoy. This is why the land mass of the earth seems to be surrounded by water from all sides.

This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil.

An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.]

Verse no. 78:

लङ्केश्वरप्रणतिभङ्गद्वव्रतमन्त द्वन्द्वम्युगमचरणयोर्जनकात्मजायाः।

जेष्ठानुवृत्तिजटिलमच शिरोऽस्य साधो रन्योन्यपावनमभूदुभयम्समेत्य॥ १३-७८

laṅkeśvarapraṇatibhaṅgadṛḍhavrataṁta
dvandyamyugamcaraṇayorjanakātmajāyāḥ |
jeṣṭhānuvṛttijaṭilamca śīro'sya sādho
ranyonyapāvanamabhūdubhayamsametya || 13-78

13-78. When Bharat, who, out of love and reverence for his elder brother Lord Ram, had grown a thick plait of hairs that were matted around his head into a crown, and who had grown long beards on his radiant face, put his head on the two lotus-like feet of Sita, feet that had rejected the overtures of Ravana, then it seemed that both of them, i.e. the feet of Sita and the head of Bharat, had sanctified each other, and had attained a combined glory unmatched in the world.

Verse no. 79:

क्रोशार्धम्प्रकृतिपुरःसरेण गत्वा काकुत्स्थः स्तिमितजवेन पुष्पकेण।

शत्रुघ्नप्रतिविहितोपकार्यमार्यः साकेतोपवनमुदारमध्युवास॥ १३-७९

krośārdhamprakṛtipuraḥsareṇa gatvā kākutsthaḥ stimitajavena puṣpakeṇa |
śatrughnaprativihitopakāryamāryaḥ sāketopavanamudāramadhyuvāsa ||
13-79

13-79. The citizens of Ayodhya (who had come to receive Lord Ram) led the procession, that was moving back into the city, from the front, while the Pushpak plane, with Lord Ram on board, followed them from the rear. In this way, after proceeding for a distance of half a kosha¹, Lord Ram encamped in a royal garden that had already been spruced up and made ready by Shatrughan (younger brother of Bharat) to be used as a temporary halt for the Lord before his final entry inside the city of Ayodhya.

[Note--¹A kosha is an ancient measurement of distance. With reference to the mile, it is equivalent to approximately 1.8 or 1.9 miles, or about 2 miles if rounded off. Hence, half a kosha would be a distance of about 1 mile.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये त्रयोदशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye trayodaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 13th chapter of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Chapter (Sarga) 14, verse nos. 1-87:

Introduction

After spending some time in the garden on the outskirts of Ayodhya, Lord Ram and Laxman entered the city. They first met their mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively. The mothers had been very distraught because of two misfortunes that had befallen them one after the other--the first was that their sons Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to the forest, and second, their husband, king Dashrath, had died as a consequence of this shock. Now, when they saw their sons, the dam of their patience burst, and torrents of tears drained down their eyes as they lovingly embraced the two brothers.

After that, Sita too bowed before her mothers-in-law who blessed her, saying that it was the strength of her chastity, character and loyalty towards her husband Lord Ram and her motherly love for Laxman that had successfully protected them during the testing times of the last fourteen years of their forest exile.

Thereafter, the senior ministers of the court anointed Lord Ram as the king following an elaborate ritual wherein holy waters from all over the earth were sprinkled on the Lord. Then Lord Ram was formally honoured by all the citizens amidst a lot of fanfare and celebrations. The Lord then went to the palace of his late father Dashrath where he met Kaikeyi, mother of Bharat, and the one at whose behest king Dashrath was forced to send Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita to the forest. Lord Ram affectionately met Kaikeyi and paid her great respect, showing no ill-will against her, which in turn provided her great relief and removed the burden of guilt from her mind.

After some time, Lord Ram gave gifts to his friends such as Sugriv, Vibhishan etc, and requested them to return home, telling them that they would always be welcomed in Ayodhya whenever they pleased to come. The Lord then asked the Pushpak plane to return to Kuber, its original owner before Ravana had snatched it.

Thereafter, Lord Ram began his reign in a very exemplary manner by following all the rules and regulations as described in the scriptures. The citizens were very happy and contented. *

Once, sage Agastya came to visit the Lord, and narrated to him the story of Ravana.

In due course, Sita became pregnant. One day, while Lord Ram was surveying the skyline of the city of Ayodhya from his royal palace, he asked one of his trusted spies about what the subjects were speaking of him. The spy first hesitated, but on the Lord's insistence he told him that some common people were privately raising doubts about the purity and integrity of Sita as she had spent quite a long time in the palace of her abductor Ravana. Lord Ram was, of course, stunned and speechless as he had already tested Sita's chastity and purity by making her undergo the fire test in Lanka itself before accepting her. But still, the Lord did not want that his subjects harbour any kind of misgivings about his character as that would undermine both his and Sita's reputation. If he has to enforce discipline in his kingdom and expect that his subjects live honest lives characterised by righteousness, probity and good conduct, then he must first clear his own name from taints. Using force against his subjects and punishing the person who was making such baseless allegations would be counterproductive as then people would say that their doubts were indeed true.

So the Lord thought that the best option for him was to abandon Sita for the rest of his life. He thus called Laxman and asked him, with a very heavy and distraught heart, to take Sita to the hermitage of sage Valmiki and leave her there in the sage's safe custody.

So, Laxman took Sita on a chariot, and with the excuse that he would take her around to see the many gardens and forests of the kingdom, he took her to the banks of river Ganges, and told her about Lord Ram's decision. Sita was taken aback and totally numbed by this unwarranted and unexpected development. She did not show any anger towards Lord Ram, but regarded her abandonment as purely her bad luck and darkness of her destiny.

As her last message, Sita told Laxman to go back and tell her respects to mothers-in-law, asking them to bless her pregnancy, and to tell Lord Ram to forgive her if she had committed any error in life, and that she was also his subject, and therefore it was incumbent upon him and his sacrosanct duty to take care of her too. She had proved her innocence by the fire-test before everyone present in Lanka itself, and its absolutely unbelievable and profoundly astonishing that such wild allegations against her character are raised inspite of it. Nevertheless, she bows her head before the wishes of her husband and accepts whatever is written in her fate and destiny. Now, she said that she would do severe Tapa (penance) with the sun-god as a witness to further clean her, and ask for a boon that in her next birth she would once again be united and find nearness with her beloved husband Lord Ram.

After Laxman left, Sita began weeping and lamenting loudly, and her wailings made all the animals and trees sad and grief-stricken. When sage Valmiki heard of her pitiful cries, he followed the directions from where the sound came, and found Sita alone and abandoned. Valmiki was overwhelmed with profound grief, and since he had the spiritual powers to see things not visible to the eye and are beyond the present, he immediately realised what had happened. He comforted Sita and told her not to worry at all, as he is like her father and would take full care of her; she needn't feel alone and abandoned. Valmiki took Sita to his hermitage and made her feel at home. He told Sita that he would treat her like his own daughter, and when she gave birth to her children he would take full care and responsibility for their well-being and

education. She must feel at home in his hermitage, and for company she will have other daughters and wives of sages who live around his hermitage. Further, the charming environment of the green forest with its rivers, fruit trees, fresh air, and the religious activities that are daily conducted in his hermitage would keep her engaged and entertained.

So, Sita accompanied the exalted sage Valmiki to his hermitage where the sage lodged her in a thatched cottage. Sita found company with other young and old ladies of the many sages who lived either in sage Valmiki's own hermitage or in the hermitages of the surrounding sages.

When Laxman returned and told Lord Ram everything, the Lord wept bitterly as he loved Sita beyond everything else, and he had to leave her physically to avoid controversy, but she had an inalienable and inseparable place in his heart for all times to come; she always lived in his heart though she was not present with him in physical terms.

As time moved on, Lord Ram kept himself busy by engaging in the routine affairs of the kingdom. He performed many Ashwamedha (horse) sacrifices where a golden statue of Sita was used to represent her. When Sita heard that the Lord did not marry again and had used her golden statue during the horse sacrifices, her grief was somewhat alleviated as she realised that the Lord still loved her and treated her as his wife. #

{* This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 8-to Doha no. 24.

This part of the story, i.e. the part dealing with Sita's abandonment, is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 1-4.}

Now, let us resume our reading of the text of Canto 14 of Raghuvansham as follows:-

Verse no. 1:

**भर्तुः प्रणाशादथ शोचनीयम् दशान्तरम् तत्र समम् प्रपन्ने।
अपश्यताम् दाशरथी जनन्यौ छेदादिवोपघ्नतरोर्व्रतत्यौ ॥ १४-१**

bhartuḥ praṇāśādatha śocanīyam daśāntaram tatra samam prapanne |
apaśyatām dāśarathī jananyau chedādivopaghñatarorvratatyau || 14-1

14-1. {At the end of the previous Canto no. 13 we have read that Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman stopped for a while at a royal garden on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya which Shatrughan had prepared for a short rest of the Lord before his entry in the city. The mothers of Lord Ram and Laxman, i.e. Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively, were present there at the time of the arrival of the Lord in the garden. The two mothers, along with other senior ladies of the city, had accompanied the general procession of the citizens that had gone out to receive Lord Ram at Nandigram, but all the ladies had stayed behind and encamped midway in this garden in accordance with the royal protocols and traditions of the time. This is the reason why Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman made a stopover here instead of proceeding straight to the city.}

Lord Ram and Laxman met their respective mothers in that royal garden where they had made a brief stopover before proceeding to the city of Ayodhya. The two mothers were in a deplorable condition, and they wore a sad, sunken and grief-stricken look

like a pair of creepers that has lost the support of the tree on which they had all along relied for support and shelter, because that tree had been cut down.

[Note--The two queens were heart-broken and sad because they had lost their husband, king Dashrath who had died soon after Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had gone to the forest--i.e. fourteen years ago. In this verse, the tree that gives support to the creeper is king Dashrath, while the two mothers are compared to the creepers that find support and shelter in the tree.]

Verse no. 2:

उभावु भाभ्याम् प्रणतौ हत अरी यथा क्रमम् विक्रम शोभिनी तौ।
विस्पष्टम् अस्र अन्धतया न दृष्टौ ज्ञातौ सुत-स्पर्श सुख उपलम्भात् ॥ १४-२

ubhāvu bhābhyām praṇatau hata arī yathā kramam vikrama śobhinau tau |
vispaṣṭam asra andhatayā na drṣṭau jñyātau suta-sparśa sukha upalambhāt || 14-2

14-2. Both the brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, who were vanquishers of enemies and were renowned for their valour and courage, then bowed before both the mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively, one after another. The eyes of the two mothers were full of tears which dimmed their vision so much so that they could not properly see their sons, but they could recognise their sons only when the two brothers touched their feet and the mothers reciprocated by touching their heads affectionately. This awareness that their beloved sons are back home filled the two mothers with joy.

Verse no. 3:

आनन्दजः शोकजमश्रुबाष्पः तयोरशीतम् शिशिरो बिभेद।
गङ्गासरय्वोर्जलमुष्णतप्तम् हिमाद्रिनिस्स्यन्द इवावतीर्णः ॥ १४-३

ānandajaḥ śokajamaśrubāṣpaḥ tayoraśītam śīśiro bibheda |
gaṅgāsarayvorjalamuṣṇataptam himādrinisyanda ivāvatīrṇaḥ || 14-3

14-3. Just as the cool water cascading down the slope of the snow-clad Himalaya mountains would cool down the water of the rivers Ganges and Saryu that had become hot during the scorching heat of summer days, so likewise the cool tears of joy and happiness coming out of the eyes of the mothers cooled down the tears of grief and sadness that had been flowing down their eyes till then.

Verse no. 4:

ते पुत्रयोःनैऋतशस्त्रमार्गान् आर्द्रानिवाङ्गे सदयम् स्पृशन्तौ।
अपीप्सितम् क्षत्रकुलाङ्गनानाम् न वीरसूशब्दमकामयेताम् ॥ १४-४

te putrayoḥnairṭasastraṁmārgān ārdhrānivāṅge sadayam sprśantau |
apīpsitam kṣatrakulāṅganānām na vīrasūśabdamaḥkāmayetām || 14-4

14-4. When the mothers saw the marks of wounds made on the bodies of the two brothers by the attack of the demons (during the war of Lanka), they began to tenderly touch them and feel them softly with their nimble fingers as if the wounds were still raw (although they had healed by now, except the scar tissue that would take time to wear off). At that time the mothers became very upset and worried regarding the injury that their sons had suffered, forgetting that they were mothers of heroes who were supposed to have a strong heart and exercise control over their emotions when they see war-wounds on their sons' bodies, as these wounds are signs of valour, courage and bravery befitting of a warrior, and not signs of cowardice.

Verse no. 5:

क्लेशावहा भर्तुरलक्षणाहम् सीतेति नाम स्वमुदीरयन्ती।
स्वर्गप्रतिष्ठस्य गुरोर्महिष्या वभक्तिभेदेन वधूर्ववन्दे ॥ १४-५

kleśāvahā bharturalakṣaṇāham sīteti nāma svamudīrayantī |
svargapratīṣṭhasya gurormahiṣyā vabhaktibhedena vadhūrvavande || 14-5

14-5. Sita then bowed and touched the feet of the two widowed mothers-in-law with equal respect and devotion. While doing so, she said: "Oh respected mothers! I am Sita, the unfortunate one who had brought so much misery to my husband (Lord Ram)¹."

[Note--¹Sita was expressing her regret for being the cause of so much suffering of Lord Ram in the forest as it was she on whose account Lord Ram and Laxman had to fight the ferocious war with the demons, a war that led to so many wounds on their bodies.

Now the context of Sita's observation is markedly clear--when she observed that the mothers were sad when they saw deep scars of wounds on the bodies of Lord Ram and Laxman, she felt guilty as these wounds were made during the war to free her from the grip of the demons of Lanka. Had she not been with them, or had she been more fortunate, there was no reason why her husband, Lord Ram, and her brother-in-law Laxman would suffer so many wounds because they would not have fought any war for her.]

Verse no. 6:

उत्तिष्ठ वत्से ननु स अनुजोः असौ वृत्तेन भर्ता शुचिना तवैव।
कृच्छ्रम् महत्तीर्ण इव प्रियार्हाम् तामूचतुस्ते प्रियमप्यमिथ्या ॥ १४-६

uttiṣṭha vatse nanu sa anujoh asau vṛttena bhartā śucinā tavaiva |
kṛcchram mahattīrṇa iva priyārham tāmūcatuste priyamapyamithyā || 14-6

14-6. The two mothers-in-law lifted Sita very affectionately, and told her not to feel remorseful at all. They said to her: "Our dear daughter! Do not feel any regret or remorse, for it is quite the contrary from what you had just said. In fact, it was the strength of your character, your virtuousness, loyalty, devotion and steadfastness in the face of adversities that had protected the two young brothers from the calamity

that had befallen them, and your courage and resilience during those adversities are truly praiseworthy. So therefore, there is nothing to feel guilty about."

Verse no. 7:

अथाभिषेकम् रघुवंशकेतोः प्रारब्धमानन्दजलैर्जनन्योः।

निर्वर्तयामासुरमात्यवृद्धाः तीर्थाहृतैः काञ्चनकुम्भतोयैः ॥ १४-७

athābhiṣekam raghuvaṁśaketoh prārabdhamānandajalairjananyoh |
nirvartayāmasuramātyavṛddhāḥ tīrthāhṛtaiḥ kāñcanakumbhatoyaiḥ || 14-7

14-7. After that, the ministers of the kingdom formally anointed Lord Ram as the king by sprinkling on him waters collected in golden pots from the holy rivers of different pilgrim places of the land. The Lord Ram's anointment had already been initiated with the tears of the mothers that fell on him (when the Lord met them), and it was now formally completed with this official ritual conducted by the ministers.

Verse no. 8:

सरित्समुद्रान्सरसीश्च गत्वा रक्षःकपीन्द्रैरुपपादितानि।

तस्यापतन्मूर्ध्नि जलानि जिष्णोः विन्ध्यस्य मेघप्रभवा इवापः ॥ १४-८

saritsamudrānsarasīśca gatvā rakṣaḥkapīndrairupapāditāni |
tasyāpatanmūrdhni jalāni jiṣṇoh vindhyasya meghaprabhavā ivāpaḥ || 14-8

14-8. Meanwhile, the commanders of the monkeys and demons had ordered their kinsfolk to bring large pitchers of different oceans, rivers, lakes and waterfalls from across the country, and at the time of Lord Ram's anointment on the throne of the kingdom these waters were poured on his head just like the water brought by the clouds is showered as rain on the summit of Mt. Vindhyachal.

[Note--The friends of Lord Ram such as Sugriv and Vibhishan made their contribution in the auspicious ceremony of anointment of Lord Ram as the king by ordering their respective compatriots, the monkeys and demons respectively, to spread out and immediately bring water from far-flung places of the land to be used in the anointment ceremony. Since they were faster in movement than men, they were deputed to bring water from oceans, rivers, lakes and waterfalls by the time preparations were being made for the elaborate anointment ceremony.

The collected water was poured on Lord Ram during the ritual of anointment. It reminded one of how the cloud pours torrents of rainwater on the summit of Vindhyachal mountain during a heavy downpour.]

Verse no. 9:

तपस्विवेषक्रिययापि तावत् यः प्रेक्षणीयः सुतराम् बभूव।

राजेन्द्रनेपथ्यविधानशोभा तस्योदितासीत्पुरुक्तदोषा ॥ १४-९

tapasviveṣakriyayāpi tāvat yaḥ prekṣaṇīyaḥ sutarām babhūva |
rājendranepathyavidhānaśobhā tasyoditāsītpunaruktadoṣā || 14-9

14-9. Lord Ram, who had an innate charm, had looked magnificent while he was attired as a hermit (during his forest exile days), now looked all the more remarkable and many times more attractive during his coronation ceremony, when he was dressed in royal robes and adorned by other royal regalia befitting an Emperor, the King of Kings.

[Note--It is to be noted here that this formal coronation ceremony was conducted in the royal garden on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya. This fact would be clear in the next verse that says that after his coronation, Lord Ram proceeded to enter the city.]

Verse no. 10:

स मौलरक्षोहरिभिः ससैन्यः तूर्यस्वनानन्दितपौरवर्गः।
विवेश सौधोदगतलाजवर्षाम् उत्तोरणामन्वयराजधानीम् ॥ १४-१०

sa maularakṣoharibhiḥ sasainyaḥ tūryasvanānanditapauravargaḥ |
viveśa saudhodgatalājavarṣām uttoraṇāmanvayarājadhānīm || 14-10

14-10. Accompanied by his senior and elderly ministers and courtiers, as well as his monkey and demon friends (who had come with the Lord aboard the Pushpak plane from Lanka), Lord Ram entered the capital city of Ayodhya with full state honours and observance of royal protocols of his ancestors in keeping with the traditions of the time.

The city had been lively decorated with banners, flags and buntings of different colours and sizes. Rice flakes were being showered from whitewashed homes on the royal procession that brought Lord Ram to the city. And continuous music from trumpets and drums echoed throughout the city to the joy and merriment of its citizens.

Verse no. 11:

सौमित्रिणा सावरजेन मन्दम् आधूतबालव्यजनो रथस्थः।
धृतातपत्रो भरतेन साक्षात् उपायसंघात इव प्रवृद्धः ॥ १४-११

saumitriṇā sāvarajena mandam ādhūtabālavyajano rathasthaḥ |
dhṛtātapatro bharatena sākṣāt upāyasamghāta iva pravṛddhaḥ || 14-11

14-11. Lord Ram sat on a royal chariot, with Laxman and Shatrughan waving fan-like whiskers by standing on his two sides, and Bharat holding a ceremonial umbrella on the Lord's head. In this way, when the four brothers entered the city of Ayodhya on the chariot, it looked as if all the four cardinal principles of good and effective governance and tools of political science, such as Sama, Daana, Danda and Bheda¹ have manifested themselves on the same platform.

[Note--¹Refer to verse no. 84 of Chapter 10 of Raghuvansham where these four principles have been explained. In this referred verse, the four brothers are likened to the four principles of Sam, Daan, Danda and Bheda that are tools used for good and effective governance.]

Verse no. 12:

**प्रासादकालागुरुधूमराजिः तस्याः पुरो वायुवशेन भिन्ना।
वनान्निवृत्तेन रघूत्तमेन मुक्ता स्वयम् वेणिरिवाबभासे ॥ १४-१२**

prāsādakālāgurudhūmarājiḥ tasyāḥ puro vāyuvāśena bhinnā |
vanānnivṛttena raghūttamena muktā svayam veṇirivābabhāse || 14-12

14-12. The black smoke arising from the burning of auspicious 'agar wood' (aloes-wood)¹ that had spread over the buildings of the city, covering it with a dark veil, looked as if after returning from the forest Lord Ram had unlocked the long wavy plaits of hair that had been woven into braids and tied into a bun on the head of the deity of Ayodhya during the period of the Lord's long forest sojourn to coincide with his own matted hairs being opened and shaved at the time of his coronation.

[Note--¹Agar is known as aloes-wood, a resinous wood which gives out a fragrant smoke when burnt. It is used during religious services to offer worship to the deity established on the altar. Its smoke is used in religious practices and during meditation because of its calming properties, and as a scavenger of pollution and for overcoming evil forces.

The deity of Ayodhya was so overjoyed with her Lord Ram's return from forest that as soon as the formal shaving of the Lord's matted hairs was done, she had herself, it seems, untied her bun and unlocked the long strands of her black hairs. Then she danced around in merriment so that her hairs spread over the sky. It was symbolised by the waves of thick black smoke of burning aloes-wood that wafted in the sky, sometimes moving to the right and at other times to the left as the breeze blew.]

Verse no. 13:

**श्वश्रूजनानुष्ठितचारुवेषाम् कर्णरथस्थाम् रघुवीरपत्नीम्।
प्रासादवातायनदृश्यबन्धैः साकेतनार्योऽञ्जलिभिः प्रणेमुः ॥ १४-१३**

śvaśrūjanānuṣṭhitacāruveṣām kaṇṇīrathasthām raghuvīrapatnīm |
prāsādavātāyanadr̥śyabandhaiḥ sāketanāryo'ñjalibhiḥ praṇemuḥ || 14-13

14-13. The women folk of Ayodhya eagerly craned their necks out of their windows and balconies to have a glimpse of Sita, who was seated in a palanquin, and bow to her from their perches in their respective homes. Sita's mothers-in-law had richly attired her in royal robes and adorned her with jewels, giving her a rare royal splendour.

{The palanquin in this case was a royal coach carried on the shoulders of bearers, and used by queens for travel. It was lavishly furnished in the interior, had

curtains drawn on its doors and latticed windows, and was decorated with flowers and royal insignia on the outside.}

Verse no. 14:

**स्फुरत्प्रभामण्डनमानसूयम् सा बिभ्रती शाश्वतमङ्गरागम्।
रराज शुद्धेति पुनः स्वपूर्ये संदर्शिता वह्निगतेव भर्त्रा ॥ १४-१४**

sphuratprabhāmaṇḍanamānasūyam sā bibhratī śāśvatamaṅgarāgam |
rarāja śuddheti punaḥ svapuryai saṁdarśitā vahnigateva bhartrā || 14-14

14-14. Sita's body still had the fragrant and indelible ointment or paste that Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri, had rubbed on her when she visited the sage's wife in the forest. That paste made her skin glow like gold that has been put into the fire, as if Lord Ram had once again made her enter the fire to prove her purity and chastity for the people of Ayodhya.

[Note--The paste applied by Anusuyia was indelible, and it stuck on the skin of Sita ever since. In all probability, it was this ointment or paste that was smeared on her body which helped to protect her purity and dignity when Ravana caught hold of her hands and dragged her onto his chariot to take her to Lanka. It acted like a shield to protect her skin from being touched by another man. It is also probable that this ointment had protected her from being burnt while undergoing the fire test on the battle-field of Lanka. Since this paste had been applied by a great sage's wife, it surely had some mystical abilities in it that was little known by others. Its a truly remarkable thing that the paste survived on Sita's body even after the passage of so long a time. This also shows how highly chemistry and science were evolved during those ancient times.]

Verse no. 15:

**वेश्मानि रामः परिवर्हवन्ति विश्राण्य सौहार्दनिधिः सुहृद्भ्यः।
बाष्पायमानो बलिमन्निकेतम् आलेख्यशेषस्य पितुर्विवेश ॥ १४-१५**

veśmāni rāmaḥ paribarhavanti viśrāṇya sauhārdanidhiḥ suhṛdbhyaḥ |
bāṣpāyamāno balimanniketam ālekhyasheṣasya piturviveśa || 14-15

14-15. As soon as Lord Ram entered the city, he came to his friends Sugriv and others and asked them to take up residence in well furnished guest houses. Then the Lord went to the palace of his father Dashrath, and entered the room where the king used to live. The Lord entered it with the reverence with which one enters a place of worship, and upon seeing a lone portrait of his dead father, tears rolled down from the eyes of Lord Ram.

Verse no. 16:

कृताञ्जलिस्तत्र यदम्ब सत्यात् नाभश्यत स्वर्गफलाद्गुरुर्नः।

तच्चिन्त्यमानम् सुकृतम् तवेति जहार लज्जाम् भरतस्य मातुः ॥ १४-१६

kṛtāñjalistatra yadamba satyāt nābhraśyata svargaphalādgururnah |
taccintyamānam sukr̥tam taveti jahāra lajjām bharatasya mātuh || 14-16

14-16. There Lord Ram found Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharat and the one who was responsible for the Lord's forest exile, sitting by the side of Dashrath's portrait in a very sad, remorseful and miserable condition¹.

The Lord bowed before her most respectfully, and in order to assure her that he harbours no hard feelings towards her, he spoke to her very politely, saying: "Mother, have no regrets because you had been instrumental in making my father prove that he is steadfast in keeping his promises and upholding his vows, a virtue that has indeed opened the gate for his entry into the heaven. If you had not asked him to prove this quality by insisting he fulfils your demands, then he wouldn't have got a chance to prove to the world that he is truthful to his words of honour and never dishonours his promises even if it meant death for him². Thus, your actions helped to give shine to his character, and therefore there is no cause for you to feel so remorseful."

These polite and softly spoken words of Lord Ram helped to assuage Kaikeyi's grief-stricken heart and soothe her; she felt a bit comforted and reassured.

[Note--¹Kaikeyi had been shunned by everyone in the royal household as well as the public of Ayodhya. After her misdeeds that resulted in her husband's death, and later on when she was sternly rebuked by her own son Bharat who vowed not to see her face for the rest of his life, she was overcome with profound grief and filled with remorse. But nothing could be salvaged by then. No one even bothered to inform her that Lord Ram had come back, for they loathed her and feared that she might create another drama before the coronation of the Lord. Perhaps this was the reason why the coronation of Lord Ram was done in the royal garden outside the city so as to preempt any chance of Kaikeyi playing some foul game at the last moment.

So, Kaikeyi spent her days in the palace of king Dashrath and prayed to his soul to forgive her. This is why Lord Ram found her alone in the king's palace while all others had gone out to welcome him.

²This episode of Kaikeyi asking for boons from her husband king Dashrath and its consequence has been described in detail earlier in Canto 12, verse nos. 4-11 of Raghuvansham.]

Verse no. 17:

तथैव सुग्रीवबिभीषणादीन् उपाचरत्कृत्रिमसंविधाभिः।

संकल्पमात्रोदितसिद्धयस्ते क्रान्ता यथा चेतसि विस्मयेन ॥ १४-१७

tathaiva sugrīvabibhīṣaṇādīn upācaratkṛtrimasamvidhābhiḥ |
saṅkalpamātroditasiddhayaste krāntā yathā cetasi vismayena || 14-17

14-17. After visiting Kaikeyi, Lord Ram went to the rest houses to meet his friends Sugriv, Vibhishan and others to see if they were comfortable and well looked after. His friends were amazed that whatever they wished to have was presented to them in a very short time.

Verse no. 18:

सभाजनायोपगतान्स दिव्यान् मुनीन्पुरस्कृत्य हतस्य शत्रोः।

शुश्राव तेभ्यः प्रभवदि वृत्तम् स्वविक्रमे गौरवमादधानम् ॥ १४-१८

sabhājanāyopagatānsa divyān munīnpuraskṛtya hatasya śatroḥ |
śuśrāva tebhyaḥ prabhavādi vṛttam svavikrame gauravamādhānam
|| 14-18

14-18. After that, Lord Ram welcomed sage Agastya and others who had come to meet the Lord, as well as to wish him for his successful return and coronation. The Lord welcomed them and showed due respect to them. Then the Lord heard from sage Agastya the full historical account of Ravana, from his birth till the time of his death, a story in which the Lord too was involved as it was he who had been instrumental in the death of the mighty demon king. This story enhanced the glory and fame of Lord Ram as he had accomplished something that even the gods had failed to achieve, i.e. bring an end to Ravana and his reign of terror.

Verse no. 19:

प्रतिप्रयातेषु तपोधनेषु सुखादविज्यातगतार्धमासान्।

सीतास्वहस्तोपहृताग्र्यपूजान् रक्षःकपीन्द्रान्विससर्ज रामः ॥ १४-१९

pratiprayāteṣu tapodhaneṣu sukhādavijñyātagatārdhamāsān |
sītāsvahastopahṛtāgryapūjān rakṣaḥkapīndrānvisasarja rāmaḥ || 14-19

14-19. When the sages (Agastya etc.) had departed, Lord Ram bid farewell to his monkey and demon friends (led by Sugriv and Vibhishan respectively) who were so happy and comfortable while living in the city under the patronage of the Lord that half a month had passed without them even being aware of the time¹. At the time of their departure, Sita herself brought gifts and other paraphernalia to honour them (and thank them for all that they had done for her).

[Note--¹This verse clearly says that Lord Ram had returned to Ayodhya about half a month ago from the date he bid farewell to his friends. At the time of their departure, the Lord promised them abiding friendship and told them that they were welcome anytime they wished to visit him in the future. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16-to Doha no. 17-a; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 20.

Meanwhile, the time mentioned in this verse is 'half a month; a fortnight', but in Ram Charit Manas it is six months--refer: Uttar Kand, Doha no. 15.]

Verse no. 20:

तच्चात्मचिन्तासुलभम् विमानम् हृतम् सुरारेः सह जीवितेन।
कैलासनाथोद्वहनाय भूयः पुष्पम् दिवः पुष्पकमन्वमंस्त ॥ १४-२०

taccātmacintāsulabham vimānam hṛtam surāreḥ saha jīvitena |
kailāsanāthodvahanāya bhūyaḥ puṣpam divaḥ puṣpakamanvamaṁsta ||
14-20

14-20. Thereafter, Lord Ram instructed the Pushpak plane, which derived its name from the word 'pushpa', meaning a flower, because it was very attractive and so magnificent that it was like a flower from the heavens, to return home to Kuber, its original owner (before Ravana snatched it from the latter)¹.

This plane had the unique ability to come to the service of those who wished to have it, and it had come to Lord Ram after the death of Ravana (because the Lord had so wished, as he had to go to Ayodhya in a very short time, and the air route was the only option left, as going by land would have taken a very long time)².

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 4-b. In this version of the story of Lord Ram, the Pushpak was ordered to return home to Kuber as soon as Lord Ram landed in Nandigram, on the outskirts of Ayodhya.

²According to Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 117, Vibhishan had loaded the Pushpak plane with gems and priceless jewels from his treasury, and presented them to Lord Ram as a gift. At that time, however, the Lord asked Vibhishan to go to the sky and shower everything on the ground so that monkeys and bears would take whatever they wished to have as a reward-gift as well as for the sake of memorabilia. When the time came for departure from Lanka, Lord Ram used this plane because he did not have much time left in hand, as the fourteen years of his forest exile was to end shortly, and if he did not return by that time, Bharat wouldn't live. This is clearly stated in Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116.

But when it is said that the plane went to the service of those who wished to have it, it also means, by inference, that if the Lord needed the Pushpak plane in the future, it would come to him by his merely making a wish.]

Verse no. 21:

पितुर्नियोगाद्वनवासमेवम् निस्तीर्य रामः प्रतिपन्नराज्यः।
धर्मार्थकामेषु समाम् प्रपेदे यथा तथैवावरजेषु वृत्तिम् ॥ १४-२१

piturniyogādvanaśamevam nistīrya rāmaḥ pratipannarājyaḥ |
dharmārthakāmeṣu samām prapade yathā tathāivāvaraṣeṣu vṛttim || 14-21

14-21. In this way, after obeying his father's words by spending fourteen years in the forest, Lord Ram came back to retrieve his crown and be anointed as the king of the kingdom of Ayodhya. The Lord practiced an exemplary level of equanimity and equity in all his dealings--whether it be with the three pillars of life represented by Dharma, Artha and Kaam¹, or with his dealing with his three brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, all of whom he treated alike, without distinction or favour.

[Note--¹The three cornerstones of a man's life are (i) Dharma--to follow the principles of good conduct, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety; (ii) Artha--financial well-being, including generation of wealth and its judicious use; and (iii) Kaam--fulfilment of desires and wishes, which imply having good and noble desires, and wishing to do good to others.]

Verse no. 22:

**सर्वासु मातृष्वपि वत्सलत्वात् स निर्विशेषप्रतिपत्तिरासीत्।
षडाननापीतपयोधरासु नेता चमूनामिव कृत्तिकासु ॥ १४-२२**

sarvāsu mātṛṣvapi vatsalatvāt sa nirviśeṣapratipattirāsīt |
ṣaḍānanāpītapayodharāsu netā camūnāmiva kṛttikāsu || 14-22

14-22. Just as Lord Kartikeya, the commander of the army of gods, had six nurses called 'Kritikas'¹ whose breasts he would suckle simultaneously so that all the nurses would feel equally satisfied that he had not distinguished between them, nor preferred one over the other, so likewise Lord Ram showed his love and affection to all his three mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) equally, without distinguishing between them, nor favouring one over the other.

{To wit, Lord Ram treated all his three mothers equally as a result of which all of them reciprocated his gestures in equal terms and with equal warmth.}

[Note--¹After Kartikeya's birth, the six Kritikas had acted as his foster mothers who nursed and raised him. The six Kirtikas are represented by the six stars of the third lunar mansion. It is after the Kritikas that Lord Kartikeya got his name. This cluster of six stars is called 'Pleiades' in modern astronomy; it is one of the clusters that make up the constellation called 'Taurus'.

In order to suck milk from the breast of all his six nurses, the Kritikas, Lord Kartikeya assumed six heads. This is why he is often called 'Shadanan'--one with six heads.]

Verse no. 23:

**तेनार्थवान् लोभपराङ्मुखेन तेन घ्नता विघ्नभयम् क्रियावान्।
तेनास लोकः पितृमान्विनेत्रा तेनैव शोकापनुदेव पुत्री ॥ १४-२३**

tenārthavān lobhaparāṅmukhena tena ghnatā vighnabhayam kriyāvān |
tenāsa lokah pitr̥mānvīnetrā tenaiva śokāpanudeva putrī || 14-23

14-23. {This verse describes briefly how Lord Ram ruled over his kingdom.}

Lord Ram was extremely generous and magnanimous by nature; he had no greed nor any desire to put his subjects to any kind of financial difficulties. So therefore, he did not impose any tax on his subjects, as a result of which the people began to become wealthy and prosperous.

The Lord ensured that there was no kind of obstacle or hindrance of any kind in any sphere of life, as a result of which the people could undertake their religious

pursuits and perform various fire sacrifices with great ease, and as a reward or consequence of this the gods were always happy and they liberally blessed everyone in Ayodhya.

Lord Ram always advised his people to follow the path that was good and correct, a path that was in accordance to the principles of Dharma, i.e. a path that was auspicious, righteous, proper, noble and universally good, as a result of which everyone treated him like they would treat their own father and teacher.

Since the Lord would help anyone who was in need, treating his subjects as his children, so therefore the subjects held him in high esteem, and reciprocated the Lord's gesture by treating him with the same affection and respect as a son or daughter would treat his or her parent.

[Note--Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20-to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 28-to Doha no. 30; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43-to Doha no. 47.]

Verse no. 24:

स पौरकार्याणि समीक्ष्य काले रेमे विदेहाधिपतेर्दुहित्रा।

उपस्थितश्चारु वपुस्तदीयम् कृत्वोपभोगोत्सुकयेव लक्ष्म्या ॥ १४-२४

sa paurakāryāṇi samīkṣya kāle reme videhādhīpaterduhitṛā |
upasthitaścāru vapustadīyam kṛtvopabhogotsukayeva lakṣmyā || 14-24

14-24. After fulfilling his duties as the king during the day, Lord Ram would retire to his palace to spend some time in private with Sita who would show great respect and love for the Lord, and it appeared that the deity of Ayodhya was so satisfied and happy with the Lord's work that she had herself assumed the form of Sita to show her affection to the Lord as a reciprocal gesture to appreciate his efforts to affectionately rule the subjects of his kingdom.

Verse no. 25:

तयोर्यथाप्रार्थितमिन्द्रियार्थान् आसेदुषोः सद्मसु चित्रवत्सु।

प्राप्तानि दुःखान्यपि दण्डकेषु संचिन्त्यमानानि सुखान्यभूवन् ॥ १४-२५

tayoryathāprārthitamindriyārthān āseduṣoḥ sadmasu citravatsu |
prāptāni duḥkhānyapi daṇḍakeṣu saṁcintyamānāni sukhānyabhūvan || 14-25

14-25. The two, i.e. Lord Ram and Sita, lived happily in their palace on the walls of which hung portraits of their days in the forest. By seeing these pictures they would remember those sweet days that they spent alone in the forest, and many a times talked about those memorable events that they experienced while in the forest. Those memories did not cause any grief or pain to them, for they enjoyed remembering those days happily.

Verse no. 26:

अथाधिकस्निग्धविलोचनेन मुखेन सीता शरपाण्डुरेण।
आनन्दयित्री परिणेतुरासीत् अनक्षरव्यञ्जितदोहदेन ॥ १४-२६

athādhikasnigdhavilocanena mukhena sītā śarapāṇḍureṇa |
ānandayitrī pariṇeturāsīt anakṣaravyañjitadohadena || 14-26

14-26. Then, as time passed, Sita exhibited external signs of pregnancy. Her face became as pale as the leaves of a plant known as 'Sarpatta'¹, while her eyes too acquired a yellowish tinge and appeared a little bit shy yet more charming than before.

These obvious signs of her pregnancy made Lord Ram very happy.

[Note--¹Sarpatta is a reed known as 'Sarpatta reed', or 'rattan reeds' or 'Arundo donax' reed. The stem of the plant resembles sugarcane with a pale yellow colour. The leaves resemble that of a bamboo plant. Its flowers stalks are pale brown too. It is used in traditional Indian medicine system to improve quality of breast milk in a lactating woman, and its latex is used as a paste over sensitive skin with a burning sensation.]

Verse no. 27:

तामङ्कमारोप्य कृशाङ्गयष्टिम् वर्णान्तराक्रान्तपयोधराग्राम्।
विलज्जमानाम् रहसि प्रतीतः पप्रच्छ रामाम् रमणोऽभिलाषम् ॥ १४-२७

tāmaṅkamāropya kṛśāṅgayaṣṭim varṇāntarākrāntapayodharāgrām |
vilajjamānām rahasi pratītaḥ papraccha rāmām ramaṇo'bhilāṣam || 14-27

14-27. When Lord Ram was certain that Sita had indeed become pregnant, he would lovingly caress his bashful wife and made her sit on his lap. Sita had become lean and thin, and her breast and nipples had changed their colour and texture. Lord Ram would ask her what she wanted during pregnancy, and promised her that all her desires would be fulfilled.

Verse no. 28:

सा दष्टनीवारबलीनि हिंस्रैः संबद्धवैखानसकन्यकानि।
इयेष भूयः कुशवन्ति गन्तुम् भागीरथीतीरतपोवनानि ॥ १४-२८

sā daṣṭanīvārabalīni himsraiḥ sambaddhavaikhānasakanyakāni |
iyeṣa bhūyaḥ kuśavanti gantum bhāgīrathītiratapovanāni || 14-28

14-28. Sita expressed her desire that she wished to visit once more the hermitages of sages who lived on the banks of river Ganges where thatched cottages made of kusha reed are present in abundance wherein live hermitresses and their daughters whom she had met and befriended earlier during her journey to the forest with the Lord. The aura around these hermitages is so holy and pious that even ferocious, flesh-eating

carnivorous animals have abandoned their natural habits, and have turned into harmless herbivores who eat plants such as reeds, grass and stems to survive.

Verse no. 29:

तस्यै प्रतिश्रुत्य रघुप्रवीरः तदीप्सितम् पार्श्वचरानुयातः।
आलोकयिष्यन्मुदितामयोध्याम् प्रासादमभ्रंलिहमारुरोह ॥ १४-२९

tasyai pratiśrutya raghupravīraḥ tadīpsitam pārśvacarānuyātaḥ |
āloka-yiṣyanmuditāmayodhyām prāsādamabhraṁlihamāruroha || 14-29

14-29. Lord Ram assured her that he would certainly fulfil her desire to go and visit these hermitages once again. After that, the Lord took along his attendants and went to the terrace of his mansion, which was so tall that it almost touched the clouds in the sky, in order to view the landscape and the skyline of the charming city of Ayodhya and its outskirts as far as the eyes could see.

Verse no. 30:

ऋद्धापणम् राजपथम् स पश्यन् विगाह्यमानाम् सरयूम् च नौभिः।
विलासिभिश्चाध्युषितानि पौरैः पुरोपकण्ठोपवनानि रेमे ॥ १४-३०

ṛddhāpaṇam rājapatham sa paśyan vigāhyamānām sarayūm ca naubhiḥ |
vilāsibhiścādyuṣitāni pauraiḥ puropakaṇṭhopavanāni reme || 14-30

14-30. From the terrace of his majestic palace, Lord Ram could descry the streets of the city lined with shops full of merchandise of all sorts, the Saryu river where colourful boats plied up and down to ferry passengers and entertain those who wished to take a pleasure ride on the river, as well as the many well-kept gardens and public parks where people were enjoying themselves, and having a good time in merrymaking, dancing and singing.

Verse no. 31:

स किंवदन्तीम् वदताम् पुरोगः स्ववृत्तमुद्दिश्य विशुद्धवृत्तः।
सर्पाधिराजोरुभुजोऽपसर्पम् पप्रच्छ भद्रम् विजितारिभद्रः ॥ १४-३१

sa kiṁvadantīm vadatām purogaḥ svavṛttamuddiśya viśuddhavṛttaḥ |
sarpādhirājorubhujo'pasarpam papraccha bhadram vijitāribhadraḥ || 14-31

14-31. Pleased and contented by the pleasant sight of Ayodhya that he saw, Lord Ram-- who was eloquent in his speech, who was righteous, honourable and noble by his innate nature, who had long arms and muscular thighs like that of Seshnath's (the celestial serpent's) body, and who was a vanquisher of enemies-- asked Bhadramukha, one of his trusted spies (or intelligence officer, or an officer of the secret service): "Say Bhadra, what do the citizens say about me. {Tell me the truth without fear; it will remain confidential. I assure you that there would be no retribution against either

you or the person who might be speaking something negative about me. But as a ruler, I must have the feel of the pulse of the subjects so that I can take remedial measures if I am in the wrong. I don't want that my subjects should harbour any ill-will or mistrust for me. I must ensure that my image is clean.}"

Verse no. 32:

निर्बन्धपृष्टः स जगाद सर्वम् स्तुवन्ति पौराश्चरितम् त्वदीयम्।

अन्यत्र रक्षोभवानोषितायाः परिग्रहान्मानवदेव देव्याः ॥ १४-३२

nirbandhaprṣṭaḥ sa jagāda sarvam stuvanti paurāscaritam tvadīyam |
anyatra rakṣobhavanōṣitāyāḥ parigrahānmānavadeva devyāḥ || 14-32

14-32. The spy remained silent for a while. But when Lord Ram politely repeated his question many times, Bhadramukha replied: "My honourable Lord! You are like a personified form of a god in a human form! There is no doubt that the people in general have a great opinion of you and are very appreciative of you. They eulogise your virtues and laud your characters; they hold you in high esteem and feel honoured to be by your subjects. But there is one thorn that sticks out--and it is this: there is a general feeling that since Sita was in the custody of the demon king Ravana for a long time, it was not good for you to accept her as your wife. {To wit, the people speak in hush-hush tones about the propriety of accepting a lady as one's wife after she had spent a long time with another man.}"¹

[Note--¹Its a great irony of fate that though Sita had proved her purity and chastity by undergoing the 'fire-test' in front of the monkeys and bears and demons on the battle-field of Lanka before Lord Ram had accepted her, the Lord still had to hear this slanderous accusation. But on close scrutiny one would observe that the citizens themselves could not be solely blamed for this situation. The reason is that no one from Ayodhya was present in Lanka when Lord Ram put Sita through the fire-test. If there was no necessity for it, then why did the Lord make her do it? What to talk of the citizens, even the Lord himself harboured reservations about her purity as proved by his ordering her to undertake the fire-test. So how can he now become angry with his citizens for the same doubt which he himself had?

But now it was too late; even those who had witnessed it, i.e. the demons led by Vibhishan, and the monkeys and bears led by Sugriv, Angad and Jamvant, had gone home after the Lord bid them farewell. Had they been present, the Lord would have called a full court and make them swear about their witnessing Sita's fire-test in Lanka. But that opportunity was also lost.

Punishing the persons who were making such allegations would send a wrong signal down the rank and file of his subjects--they would murmur and gossip silently that their doubts were indeed credible as Lord Ram feared putting Sita to a fire-test to prove her innocence, so he had become vengeful.

But the question arises, why did Lord Ram not put Sita to a second fire-test? We must remember that she was now pregnant, and who would predict and take a guarantee that the child in her womb would not be harmed by the heat of the raging fire if Sita was forced to undertake the fire-test once again. Besides this, queens never appeared in full public view as a routine matter of royal protocol. And making Sita take the fire-test openly meant a spectacle where hundreds of people would assemble,

which obviously would violate her dignity and self-respect. Further, it would embolden mischievous elements to say something else about both Lord Ram and Sita, as well as other members of his family, and this vicious cycle would have no end.

So the Lord thought that it would be better to cap this nasty thing once and for all right now.]

Verse no. 33:

**कलत्रनिन्दागुरुणा किलैवम् अभ्याहतम् कीर्तिविपर्ययेण।
अयोघनेनाय इवाभितप्तम् वैदेहिबन्धोर्हृदयम् विदद्रे ॥ १४-३३**

kalatranindāguruṇā kilaivam abhyāhatam kīrtiviparyayaṇa |
ayoghanenāya ivābhitaptam vaidehibandhorhṛdayam vidadre || 14-33

14-33. Hearing such wild and unfounded allegations, which were truly false and patently baseless, the heart of Lord Ram, the protector of Sita and her dignity, honour and self-respect, was torn asunder and shattered to pieces just like a hot piece of iron is crushed and splintered or broken into pieces when hit by a large hammer by an iron-smith.

Verse no. 34:

**किमात्मनिर्वादकथामुपेक्षे जायामदोषामुत संत्यजामि।
इत्येकपक्षाश्रयविकलवत्वात् आसीत्स दोलाचलचित्तवृत्तिः ॥ १४-३४**

kimātmanirvādakathāmupekṣe jāyāmadoṣāmuta samtyajāmi |
ityekapakṣāśrayaviklavatvāt āsītsa dolācalacittavṛttiḥ || 14-34

14-34. The Lord pondered over the matter seriously and came to the conclusion that now two options were left before him--either he should neglect such wild and baseless talk, and turn a deaf ear towards it, or he should abandon Sita for the rest of his life, with nothing to do with her in future.

Lord Ram was torn apart in this dilemma, not able to decide what to do in the present circumstance. {His mental condition was like a swing or a pendulum of a clock, swinging to and fro, and oscillating between the two options.}

Verse no. 35:

**निश्चित्य चानन्यनिवृत्ति वाच्यम् त्यागेन पत्न्याः परिमार्ष्टुमैच्छत्।
अपि स्वदेहात्किमुतेन्द्रियार्थात् अशोधनानाम् हि यशो गरीयः ॥ १४-३५**

niścitya cānanyanivṛtti vācyam tyāgena patnyāḥ parimārṣṭumaicchat |
api svadehātkimutendriyārthāt aśodhanānām hi yaśo garīyaḥ || 14-35

14-35. After serious thought, the Lord came to the conclusion that the only way to bring an end to this outright slander and falsehood was to abandon his wife Sita for all times to come (as it was impossible for him to stop tongues from wagging). This is

because for an upright and honourable man, his immaculate reputation, his self-respect and dignity matter more than anything else in this world, and no other consideration, no other suffering or sacrifice, including abandonment of one's wife, should come in the way of ensuring this¹.

[Note—¹In this connection, refer also to Canto 15, verse no. 61 where we read that when Lord Ram performed the horse sacrifice and the need arose to have his wife alongside him to complete the formalities of the ritual, he had a golden image of Sita made to symbolise her physical presence. The learned reader of this book is advised to read my note appended to the referred verse to understand the full import of Lord Ram's decision.

I am quoting it here for easy reading, especially because the matter is relevant here too: 'Lord Ram was extremely conscientious about his conduct and was very careful about being on the right side of Dharma, so as to ensure that not a single subject of his kingdom or elsewhere could raise a finger against him and his upright nature. So when he had heard some evil gossip doing the rounds amongst his own subjects concerning his wife Sita, he was astonished, dismayed and dumbfounded. He could have easily summoned that mischief monger and summarily punished him for his unsubstantiated, false and audacious accusations, but since he loved his subjects like a father loves his children, and at the same time also realised that he could not suppress popular voice or view by repressive means by punishing an individual as it would do more harm than good to his own reputation, the Lord decided to remove the very cause of this cancerous hush-hush talk by sending Sita away, or literally discarding her even though he was absolutely sure she was pure, loyal, chaste and immaculate as was proved in the battle-field of Lanka itself when the Lord had asked her to prove her purity by undergoing the 'fire-test'. {Refer: (a) Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chanda line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 109; (b) Valmiki Ramayan, Yuddha Kand, Chapter 116; and (c) Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto nos. 12-13.}

But as has been observed in verse no. 32 herein above, the irony was that no one from Ayodhya was a witness to this fire-test as it was done in far-away Lanka. Obviously this situation paved the way for gossip and tongue-in-cheek remarks, and the subjects could be excused for such wild accusations because, honestly, they were completely ignorant of the reality that Sita had already proved her purity by the fire-test.

When Lord Ram deeply pondered over this aspect of the matter, he realised his own mistake of not getting the fire-test done in Ayodhya before his subjects. Hence, since it was his own error of judgement, he thought it prudent not to punish the gossipier, and instead banish Sita to a safe place under the guardianship of the senior sage Valmiki.

Insofar as that was done, it was alright. But when the Lord did the Aswamedha Yagya or the horse sacrifice, as was required of him owing to his status as a great king and emperor of the realm, the need arose to have his wife alongside him to complete the formalities of the ritual. The only way out was to have an image of Sita by his side. That Lord Ram did so with a heavy heart, and instead of marrying someone else on this pretext that a wife was needed to complete the rituals proved how loyal he was to Sita, and how diligent he was to uphold the haloed tradition of having only one wife in one's lifetime.]

Verse no. 36:

स संनिपत्यावरजान्हतौजाः तद्विक्रियादर्शनलुप्तहर्षान्।

कौलीनमात्माश्रयमाचक्षे तेभ्यःपुनश्चेदमुवाच वाक्यम् ॥ १४-३६

sa saṁnipatyāvarajānhataujāḥ tadvikriyādarśanaluptaharṣān |

kaulīnamātmāśrayamācacakṣe tebhyaḥ punaścedamuvāca vākyaṁ || 14-36

14-36. Saddened and distraught Lord Ram summoned his younger brothers who were stunned to see the Lord in such a distressed state of mind. Then the Lord informed them about the slanderous gossip that was doing the round about him. The Lord said to them--

Verse no. 37:

राजर्षिवंशस्य रविप्रसूतेः उपस्थितः पश्यत कीदृशोऽयम्।

मत्तः सदाचारशुचेः कलङ्कः पयोदवातादिव दर्पणस्य ॥ १४-३७

rājarṣivamśasya raviprasūteḥ upasthitaḥ paśyata kīdr̥śo'yam |

mattaḥ sadācāraśuceḥ kalaṅkaḥ payodavātādiva darpaṇasya || 14-37

14-37. {Lord Ram felt so dismayed and distressed in his heart when he heard the above bit of alarming information that he lamented at the bad reputation that would stain his otherwise immaculate and stellar character in the eyes of his subjects and the world at large.}

He shared his feelings of dejection and sadness with his brothers, saying: "Look, what kind of stain has occurred on my character and reputation (*kalaṅkaḥ*) in the form of the evil report that I hear now. It has cast a serious ignominy and raised a question of propriety and righteousness on my esteemed family which has been renowned down the ages as being very steadfast in upholding and adhering to the principles of righteousness, propriety, immaculacy of character, judiciousness, wisdom and uprightness, and for goodness in every sphere of life, public and personal.

I belong to an exalted and ancient family descending from great kings who have been recognised as being a family of 'Rajarshis' (*rājarṣivamśasya*), literally meaning 'kings and their descendants who were no less than great sages and seers in their level of enlightenment, wisdom, self-discipline, compassion, magnanimity, integrity, and possessing the grand old virtues of dispassion, goodness of spirit, piety of soul, auspiciousness, et al'.

They were literally 'sagely kings' who had descended from the Sun God (*raviprasūteḥ*), and hence inherited all the glories, greatness, radiance and splendour characteristic of the Sun God. {The members of the exalted family of great kings to which Lord Ram belonged were therefore called members of the 'Solar Race'.}

Say, what an ignominy, disgrace, humiliation and shame (*kalaṅkaḥ*) it is for me that such an exalted family's great reputation and honour should be tarnished because of me? What a horrible situation has destiny created for us? {Indeed, this kind of nasty and unsubstantiated gossip sullies my reputation, brings a bad name to me and my honourable family, casts aspersions on my character as well as that of my chaste, loyal and righteous wife Sita, and taints us for all times to come. This situation is simply not tenable and acceptable by any measure of imagination.}

It is just like the case of a clean mirror getting suddenly spoiled or blurred by the layer of sticky dust that settles on its clean surface to smear it when a dust-and-moisture laden air (breeze or wind) blows over the mirror in a sultry weather, leaving a dirty layer of moistened dust on the mirror's surface to ruin its cleanliness.

Verse no. 38:

पौरैषु सोऽहम् बहुलीभवन्तम् अपाम् तरंगेष्विव तैलबिन्दुम्।
सोढुम् न तत्पूर्वमवर्णमीशे आलानिकम् स्थाणुरिव दिवपेन्द्रः ॥ १४-३८

paureṣu so'ham bahulībhavantam apām taraṅgeṣviva tailabindum |
soḍhum na tatpūrvamavarṇamīśe ālānikam sthāṇuriva divpendraḥ || 14-38

14-38. Just like currents in the water spread drops of oil over a wide area, so likewise this single nasty allegation about me will slowly spread all over the city, and is sure to reach even far-flung areas of the realm. I am unable to cope with this first example of slander and taint on my reputation just like a powerful elephant would find the first instance of it being put in shackles too much for it to tolerate (and the elephant would pull and push with all its might to get itself freed from this bondage).

Verse no. 39:

तस्यापनोदाय फलप्रवृत्तौ उपस्थितायामपि निर्व्यपेक्षः।
त्यक्षामि वैदेहसुताम् पुरस्तात् समुद्रनेमिम् पितुराज्ययेव ॥ १४-३९

tasyāpanodāya phalapravṛttau upasthitāyāmapī nirvyapekṣaḥ |
tyakṣāmi vaidehasutām purastāt samudranemim piturājñyayeva || 14-39

14- 39. At the present time though Sita's pregnancy is about to mature and a child is to be born soon, yet in order to clean this horrible taint on my name and clear my reputation it is expedient for me take necessary corrective measures immediately to prevent the issue from snow-balling into a major controversy. {Say, when my sons grow up and hear about this nasty scandal, what would they think, and what negative effective would it have on their psyche?}

Hence, I must overcome emotions and overlook personal attachments with Sita in order to protect my honour by abandoning her immediately just like I had abandoned the attractions of the crown and forgone my right over the vast realm stretching upto the ocean in order to obey my father's words (that I ought to proceed to the forest forthwith).

Verse no. 40:

अवैमि चैनामनघेति किंतु लोकापवादो बलवान्मतो मे।
छाया हि भूमेः शशिनो मलत्वेन आरोपिता शुद्धिमतः प्रजाभिः ॥ १४-४०

avaimi caināmanagheti kimtu lokāpavādo balavānmato me |
chāyā hi bhūmeḥ śaśino malatvena āropitā śuddhimataḥ prajābhiḥ || 14-40

14-40. I know fully well that Sita is taintless and impeccable; she's absolutely upright and immaculate in character. But what the world says behind my back, though absolutely false and baseless, must be weighed by me in order to have a clean public image, specially when I am a king who must remain above board in all matters of probity and propriety, giving no one any chance to raise a finger against me.

It is like the case of the lunar eclipse when it is actually the shadow of the earth falling on the full moon shining brightly in the sky to make it look dark for some time, but people falsely, and out of their ignorance, say that the moon has lost its shine and covered by darkness because of some of its own fault or sin it had done in the past, or that a demon named Rahu has devoured and thereby polluted it. {There is no such thing at all. The fact is that the moon remains the same and its disc is not at all affected or distorted in size in any way whatsoever, but it appears to be reduced in size and ultimately becomes dark solely because of the earth's shadow falling on it. But still the world casts aspersions on the moon and says it is an inauspicious event for it, although it is plain and simple a physical celestial phenomenon. How can the 'shadow' of the earth dirty the moon? It is sheer nonsense, but who would listen to rationale talk?}

[Note--Lord Ram says that when the people can cast aspersions on the moon by saying it is an inauspicious moment for it when there is a lunar eclipse because the demon Rahu has devoured the moon to spit it out later, thereby polluting it, whereas there is no such thing happening at all because the darkness of the moon is only a temporary phenomenon and actually caused due to some celestial alignment when the shadow of the earth falls on the moon's surface, and not due to some demon devouring it, so then what is the wonder that the same people would say nasty and negative things about him and Sita out of their sheer ignorance, with scant attention to the truth, and the consequence their nonsensical and distasteful gossip would have on their reputation, honour and good name.]

Verse no. 41:

रक्षोवधान्तो न च मे प्रयासो व्यर्थः स वैरप्रतिमोचनाय।

अमर्षणः शोणितकाङ्क्षया किम्पदा स्पृशन्तम् दशति द्विजिह्वः ॥ १४-४१

rakṣovadhānto na ca me prayāso vyarthaḥ sa vairapratimocanāya |
amarṣaṇaḥ śoṇitakāṅkṣayā kim padā sprśantam daśati dvijihvaḥ || 14-41

14-41. Now if someone says that since I had to finally abandon Sita because she lived in the custody of the demon king Ravana, then what was the use or the need of waging such a bloody war and kill so many demons just in order to free her, for I could have let her go then itself to maintain peace, avoid bloodshed, so much hardship and suffering, and come to terms with my fate peacefully as I have decided to do now.

Well, the answer to it is that I had to free her by hook or by crook because she was kidnapped against her wish, and it was a challenge for me and my manliness. How could I let Sita be snatched from me when I was supposed to be her protector. Wouldn't neglecting her at that point of time make me look a coward, someone who runs away from his duties and responsibilities? So therefore, I had to wage a war and kill Sita's enemies to protect her as well as my own honour, self-respect and dignity.

I had been challenged and my honour trampled upon when my wife was taken away forcibly from my custody, literally from under my nose. It was like the case of a ferocious serpent who had been stepped upon by someone, whereupon the serpent would lunge forward to bite and kill the person who has trampled upon it in order to seek revenge. Had the person not stepped on the serpent, the latter would not have bitten him. The serpent bites the man to take revenge and not to drink his blood. So likewise, I killed the demons to take revenge for abducting an innocent Sita against her wish, specially when she wailed and pleaded that I rescue her from her captors, and I did not spill the blood of the demons just for the fun it."

Verse no. 42:

तदेष्ट सर्गः करुणार्द्रचित्तैः न मे भवद्भिः प्रतिषेधनीयः।

यद्यर्थिता निर्हृतवाच्यशल्यान् प्राणान्मया धारयितुम् चिरम् वः ॥ १४-४२

tadeṣa sargaḥ karuṇādracittaiḥ na me bhavadbhiḥ pratiṣedhanīyaḥ |
yadyarthitā nirhṛtavācyāśalyān prāṇānmayā dhārayitum ciram vaḥ || 14-42

14-42. {Addressing his brothers, Lord Ram further said--} "Therefore, if you wish that I survive by removing this arrow symbolising the scandalous accusation on my character, then please have mercy on me and overcome the compassion that you have for Sita in your hearts, by heeding my request, and not opposing it. It is because I would prefer to die than live with such an ignominy on my head."

Verse no. 43:

इत्युक्तवन्तम् जनकात्मजायाम् नितान्तरूक्षाभिनिवेशमीशम्।

न कश्चन भ्रातृषु तेषु शक्तो निषेद्धुमासीदनुमोदितुम् वा ॥ १४-४३

ityuktavantam janakātmajāyām nitāntarūksābhiniveśamīśam |
na kaścana bhrātr̥ṣu teṣu śakto niṣeddhumāśīdanumoditum vā || 14-43

14-43. When Lord Ram disclosed his stern decision pertaining to Sita, none of his brothers either had the courage to prohibit him from carrying out his decision, nor could they give their consent or approve of it. {All the three brothers of Lord Ram were speechless and stunned. They could neither approve nor disapprove Lord Ram. A moment of deathly silence followed.}

Verse no. 44:

स लक्ष्मणम् लक्ष्मणपूर्वजन्मा विलोक्य लोकत्रयगीतकीर्तिः।

सौम्येति चाभाष्य यथार्थभाषी स्थितम् निदेशे पृथगादिदेश ॥ १४-४४

sa lakṣmaṇam lakṣmaṇapūrvajanmā vilokya lokatrayagītakīrtiḥ |
saumyeti cābhāṣya yathārthabhāṣī sthitam nideśe pṛthagādideśa || 14-44

14-44. When Lord Ram, who was renowned in the world for being true to his words and a fulfiller of his wish, observed that only Laxman showed signs of obeying his wish without asking questions (whereas the other two brothers stood very saddened, with bowed heads, showing remorse and a quiet disapproval of the Lord's decision), he gestured to Laxman to step forward and took him aside.

Verse no. 45:

प्रजावती दोहदशंसिनी ते तपोवनेषु स्पृहयालुरेव।

स त्वम् रथी तद्व्यपदेशनेयाम् प्रापय्य वाल्मीकिपदम् त्यजैनाम् ॥ १४-४५

prajāvatī dohadaśaṁsinī te tapovaneṣu sprhayā lureva |
sa tvam rathī tadvyapadeśaneyām prāpayya vālmīkipadam tyajainām ||
14-45

14-45. Lord Ram told Laxman: "Your pregnant sister-in-law Sita had expressed her wish to me sometimes ago that she has a desire to once again visit the hermitages of sages which she had first visited during our journey to the forest (and I had promised her that her wish would be fulfilled)¹. So therefore, in order to satisfy her desire, please take her on a chariot to a place very close to sage Valmiki's hermitage and leave her there.

{She will have no suspicion because it was her own wish. This way I will have an excuse to send her away from me without any hue and cry, and as far as her security and safety is concerned, who else is more able and competent than the great sage Valmiki to take care of her? She will be safe and well looked after. This will also ensure that she is not left alone in the wilderness to fend for herself, as it would be a very cruel thing to do to an innocent lady. By this method, my reputation would be saved, and at the same time Sita would also be safe and secure in the forest. So, there is nothing to worry.}

[Note--¹Refer to verse nos. 28-29 herein above.]

Verse no. 46:

स शुश्रुवान्मातरि भार्गवेन पितुर्नियोगात्प्रहृतम् दिवषद्वत्।

प्रत्यग्रहीदग्रजशासनम् तत् आज्या गुरुणां ह्यविचारणीया ॥ १४-४६

sa śuśruvānmātari bhārgavena piturniyogātprahṛtam dviṣadvat |
pratyagrahīdagrajaśāsanam tat ājyā gurūṇāṁ hyavicāraṇīyā || 14-46

14-46. Laxman was aware of the legend that sage Parashuram had killed his own mother when his father had asked him to do so. So, he agreed to carry out his elder brother Lord Ram's instructions because one should always obey one's elders, without asking questions. {No sin would accrue to a person if he obeys the orders of his elders. The sin, if any, would accrue to the person who gives the order, and not to the person who is simply obeying such orders, because otherwise disobedience in itself is not a good thing.}

Verse no. 47:

अथानुकूलश्रवणप्रतीता मत्रस्नुभिर्युक्तधुरम् तुरंगैः।
रथम् सुमन्त्रप्रतिपन्नरश्मिम् आरोप्य वैदेहसुताम् प्रतस्थे ॥ १४-४७

athānukūlaśravaṇapratītā matrasnubhiryuktadhuram turāṅgaiḥ |
ratham sumantrapratipannaraśmim āropya vaidehasutām pratasthe || 14-47

14-47. When Sita heard that Laxman was taking her to visit the hermitages of sages, she was very happy. Laxman took her on a chariot that was driven by Sumantra, the royal charioteer. The horses were so well trained, and moved so smoothly and efficiently, that the chariot always remained steady on its path, without undue shaking or experiencing any jerk, thereby making Sita feel very comfortable during the journey.

Verse no. 48:

सा नीयमाना रुचिरान्प्रदेशान् प्रियंकरो मे प्रिय इत्यनन्दत्।
नाबुद्ध कल्पद्रुमताम् विहाय जातम् तमात्मन्यसिपत्रवृक्षम् ॥ १४-४८

sā nīyamānā rucirānpradeśān priyaṅkaro me priya ityanandat |
nābuddha kalpadrumatām vihāya jātam tamātmanyasipatravṛkṣam || 14-48

14-48. While passing through rich and verdant countryside, Sita was overjoyed by the sounds and sights of the forest. She felt happy that her husband loved her so much that he would always fulfil her desires just like the Kalpa Tree that fulfils one's desire when a person makes a wish before it. {She had expressed her wish to visit the hermitages, as well as see the countryside and the forests enroute, and the Lord immediately arranged for it.}

But it was so sad and unfortunate for Sita that she was unaware that the same Lord had become so stern and stone-hearted like a tree known as 'Asiptra'¹ that has leaves with edges as sharp as a sword that would cut a person if touched carelessly. {To wit, Sita was oblivious that this journey would end with great grief for her for as long as she lived. She was unaware that the Lord has abandoned her.}

[Note--¹There is no specific tree with this name on earth, but in ancient mythological texts it refers to the 'sword-tree' found in hell. As compared to soft leaves of other trees, this tree of hell hurts anyone who dares to touch it as its leaves are razor-sharp and meant to torment condemned souls.]

Verse no. 49:

जुगूह तस्याः पथि लक्ष्मणो यत् सव्येतरेण स्फुरता तदक्षणा।
आख्यातमस्यै गुरु भावि दुःखम् अत्यन्तलुप्तप्रियदर्शनेन ॥ १४-४९

jugūha tasyāḥ pathi lakṣmaṇo yat savyetareṇa sphuratā tadakṣṇā |
ākhyātamasyai guru bhāvi duḥkham atyantaluptapriyadarśanena || 14-49

14-49. Laxman had not disclosed to Sita anything about the gloom and grief that was to come to her soon, but the flickering of the right eyelids of Sita had indicated to her that something ominous was to happen.

[Note--It is believed that if a woman's right eyelids begin to flicker or throb, then something bad is about to happen. The opposite applies to a male--i.e. a man's left eyelids flickering or throbbing means something bad is in the offing for him.]

Verse no. 50:

सा दुर्निमित्तोपगतादिवषादात् सद्यःपरिम्लानमुखारविन्दा।
राज्यः शिवम् सावरजस्य भूयादित्य् आशशंसे करणैरबाहयैः ॥ १४-५०

sā durnimittopagatādivṣādāt sadyaḥparimlānamukhāravindā |
rājñyaḥ śivam sāvarajasya bhūyādity āśaśamse karaṇairabāhyaiḥ || 14-50

14-50. As soon as her left eyelids began to throb, she became worried and sad. She prayed that her husband and his three brothers be protected from harm and live happily.

Verse no. 51:

गुरोर्नियोगाद्वनिताम् वनान्ते साध्वीम् सुमित्रातनयो विहास्यन्।
अवार्यतेवोत्थितवीचिहस्तैः जहनोर्दुहित्रा स्थितया पुरस्तात् ॥ १४-५१

gurorniyogādvānitām vanānte sādhvīm sumitrātanayo vihāsyān |
avāryatevotthitavīcihastaiḥ jahnorduhitrā sthitayā purastāt || 14-51

14-51. On the way, they came to the banks of river Ganges whose waves rose high as if waving to Laxman and asking him not to take Sita, who was chaste and loyal to her husband, to the forest to abandon her on the instructions of his elder brother, Lord Ram.

[Note--River Ganges is a holy river, so when it raised its hands in the form of its waves which swayed left and right, to and fro, it appeared that the deity of the river was signalling to Laxman not take Sita to her exile, as she was pure, as the deity itself vouched for it.]

Verse no. 52:

रथात्स यन्त्रा निगृहीतवाहात् ताम् भ्रातृजायाम् पुलिनेऽवतार्य।
गङ्गाम् निषादाहतनौविशेषः ततार संधामिव सत्यसंधः ॥ १४-५२

rathātsa yantrā nigrhītavāhāt tām bhrātrajāyām puline'vatārya |
gaṅgām niṣādāhṛtanauviśeṣaḥ tatāra saṁdhāmiva satyasamdhāḥ || 14-52

14-52. On the sandy banks of the river Ganges, the charioteer stopped the horses and loosened their reins. Laxman helped Sita to step down from the chariot on the sands, and then, true to his words given to Lord Ram that he would drop her on the other side of the river, he summoned a boat and boarded it along with Sita to take her to the other side of the river¹.

[Note--¹When Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had gone to the forest, it was exactly at this place on the banks of river Ganges where he had crossed the river on a boat and asked Sumantra to return home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100; and Doha no. 101 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Lord Ram asked Sita to be dropped on the other side of the river so that she would not be able to walk back to the city of Ayodhya.]

Verse no. 53:

अथ व्यवस्थापितवाक्कथंचित् सौमित्रिरन्तर्गतबाष्पकण्ठः।

औत्पातिकम् मेघ इवाश्मवर्षम् महीपतेः शासनमुज्जगार ॥ १४-५३

atha vyavasthāpitavākkathamcit saumitrirantargatabāṣpakaṇṭhaḥ |
autpātikam megha ivāśmavarṣam mahīpateḥ śāsanamujjagāra || 14-53

14-53. When they reached the other side of river Ganges, Laxman disclosed to Sita what Lord Ram had ordered him to do. At that time, Laxman's voice was choked, and his words felt like hailstones were being rained down on the helpless Sita to batter her physically and emotionally.

Verse no. 54:

ततोऽभिषङ्गानिलविप्रविद्धा प्रभ्रश्यमानाभरणप्रसूना।

स्वमूर्तिलाभप्रकृतिम् धरित्रीम् लतेव सीता सहसा जगाम ॥ १४-५४

tato'bhīṣaṅgānilavipraviddhā prabhraśyamānābharanaprasūnā |
svamūrtilābhaprakṛtim dharitrīm lateva sītā sahasā jagāma || 14-54

14-54. Just like the case of flowers and leaves withering and falling down to earth from a creeper when hot gusts of wind strike them during the summer, so likewise Sita collapsed on the ground, and her ornaments slipped from her body and fell alongside her.

Verse no. 55:

इक्ष्वाकुवंशप्रभवः कथम् त्वाम् त्यजेदकस्मात्पतिरार्यवृत्तः।

इति क्षितिः संशयितेव तस्यै ददौ प्रवेशम् जननी न तावत् ॥ १४-५५

ikṣvākuvaṁśaprabhavaḥ katham tvām tyajedakasmātpatirāryavṛttaḥ |
iti kṣitiḥ saṁśayiteva tasyai dadau praveśam janānī na tāvat || 14-55

14-55. At that time, Mother Earth did not open up and embrace Sita to her bosom (i.e. the earth did not split open so that Sita could enter it and vanish forever), because she (Earth) was confused and could not come to terms with the idea that Lord Ram, who was upright, honourable, and always stood for truth, would abandon Sita in this rude way for no fault of hers¹.

[Note--¹Mother Earth doubted that surely there was some kind of misunderstanding or confusion as to why Lord Ram would so suddenly abandon Sita. She thought that perhaps it was a temporary arrangement due to some reason. Had she been sure that Sita has been abandoned for life, Mother Earth would surely have opened her arms to accept her by splitting on its surface and accepting Sita in her embrace by making her sink deep into the bowls of the earth before closing the opening on the surface for good.

It must be remembered that Sita was the daughter of Mother Earth because she was found in a pitcher buried in the ground when king Janak, her worldly father, was ploughing a field as part of a sacrifice he was performing. His plough got stuck, and when the earth was dug, he discovered a newly born beautiful baby girl inside a pitcher. Janak took her and raised her as his own daughter.]

Verse no. 56:

सा लुप्तसंज्ञया न विवेद दुःखम् प्रत्यागतासुः समतप्यतान्तः।
तस्याः सुमित्रात्मजयत्नलब्धो मोहादभूत्कष्टतरः प्रबोधः ॥ १४-५६

sā luptasamjñyā na viveda duḥkham pratyāgatāsuḥ samatapyatāntaḥ |
tasyāḥ sumitrātmajayatnalabdho mohādabhūtkṣṭatarah prabodhaḥ || 14-56

14-56. When Sita fainted, she had become unconscious, and so felt no pain or grief. But when Laxman revived her by sprinkling water on her face, she felt a surge of heart-tearing grief and thought it was well if she had remained unconscious for the rest of her life, for in that condition at least she won't have to bear with the torment of unbearable pain and grief (of separation from Lord Ram, for no fault of hers).

Verse no. 57:

न चावदद्भर्तुरवर्णमार्या निराकरिष्णोर्वृजिनादृतेऽपि।
आत्मानमेवम् स्थिरदुःखभाजम् पुनः पुनर्दुष्कृतिनम् निनिन्द ॥ १४-५७

na cāvadadbharturavarṇamāryā nirākariṣṇorvrjīnādr̥te'pi |
ātmānamevam sthiraduḥkhabhājam punaḥ punarduṣkṛtinam nininda || 14-57

14-57. Sita had such a highly honourable and exemplarily noble character, as well as a pious soul, that inspite of being subjected to such a rude abandonment and an ignoble treatment by her husband (Lord Ram), she did not even mutter any harsh words for him, neither did she grumble or express anger or resentment against him. On the contrary, she cursed her own self and her Atma (soul), as well as her doomed fate, for the ill tidings, the misery, the grief and the pain she has had to face.

Verse no. 58:

आशवास्य रामावरजः सतीम् ताम् आख्यातवाल्मीकिनिकेतमार्गः।
निघ्नस्य मे भर्तृनिदेशरौक्ष्यम् देवि क्षमस्वेति बभूव नमः ॥ १४-५८

āśvāsya rāmāvarajaḥ satīm tām ākhyātavālmīkiniketamārgaḥ |
nighnasya me bharṭṛnideśaraukṣyam devi kṣamasveti babhūva namraḥ ||
14-58

14-58. Lord Ram's younger brother Laxman tried his best to comfort Sita and assuage her troubled heart. He showed her the way to sage Valmiki's hermitage. Then, he folded his hands and said to her with a very heavy heart: "Oh honourable lady, you are like a respected goddess for me (devi). But what can I do as I am duty-bound to obey the orders that have been given to me. So since I am merely carrying out instructions of my elder brother, I sincerely feel sorry and ask for forgiveness from you for my harsh actions."

Verse no. 59:

सीता तमुत्थाप्य जगाद वाक्यम् प्रीतास्मि ते सौम्य चिराय जीव।
बिडौजसा विष्णुरिवाग्रजेन भ्रात्रा यदित्थम् परवानसि त्वम् ॥ १४-५९

sītā tamutthāpya jagāda vākyaṃ prītāsmi te saumya cirāya jīva |
biḍaujasā viṣṇurivāgrajena bhrātrā yadittham paravānasi tvam || 14-59

14-59. Laxman prostrated before Sita to beg forgiveness from her. She affectionately lifted him from the ground and told him: "My honourable gentlemanly son (saumya)! I am pleased with you, and bless you with a long and happy life. You are not at all at fault, because you are simply obeying the instructions of your elder brother, which is a right thing to do just as Indra's younger brother Lord Vishnu always obeys what his elder brother Indra tells him to do.

Verse no. 60:

श्वश्रूजनम् सर्वमनुक्रमेण विज्ञ्यापय प्रापितमत्प्रणामः।
प्रजानिषेकम् मयि वर्तमानम् सूनोरनुध्यायत चेतसेति ॥ १४-६०

śvaśrūjanam sarvamanukrameṇa vijñyāpaya prāpitamatpraṇāmaḥ |
prajāniṣekam mayi vartamānam sūnoranudhyāyata cetaseti || 14-60

14-60. When you return home, please convey my appropriate respects to all my mothers-in-law and tell them on my behalf that I am bearing their son's (i.e. Lord Ram's) embryo in my womb, so they should bless it and pray for its well-being.

Verse no. 61:

वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा वहनौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम्।
माम् लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किम् तत्सदृशम् कुलस्य ॥ १४-६१

vācyastvayā madvacanātsa rājā vahnau viśuddhāmapī yatsamakṣam |
mām lokavādaśravaṇādahāsīḥ śrutasya kim tatsadr̥śam kulasya || 14-61

14.61. Then tell the king (i.e. Lord Ram) on my behalf that he had himself tested my purity and chastity by making me undertake the fire-test (in Lanka, to which Laxman too was a witness). Now therefore, is it proper for you and befitting to your status as a son of a noble dynasty in which you are born that merely on hearing what unscrupulous people are saying you should decide to abandon me for no fault of mine?

[Note—¹Refer to verse nos. 34-35 of this Canto no. 14 in this context.]

Verse no. 62:

कल्याणबुद्धेरथवा तवायम् न कामचारो मयि शङ्कनीयः।
ममैव जन्मान्तरपातकानाम् विपाकविस्फूर्जिथुरप्रसहयः ॥ १४-६२

kalyāṇabuddherathavā tavāyam na kāmācāro mayi śaṅkanīyaḥ |
mamaiva janmāntarapātakānām vipākavisphūrjithuraprasahyaḥ || 14-62

14-62. Verily indeed, you are the one who always does good to others, you always take care of those who are dependant upon you, never harming anyone, and therefore surely you would not have taken this harsh decision against me if it had not been for my doomed fate and the fruit of some unknown sin that I may have committed in my previous life, which has now struck me like a thunderbolt.

Verse no. 63:

उपस्थिताम् पूर्वमपास्य लक्ष्मीम् वनम् मया सार्धमसि प्रपन्नः।
तदास्पदम् प्राप्य तयातिरोषात् सोढास्मि न त्वद्भवने वसन्ती ॥ १४-६३

upasthitām pūrvamapāsya lakṣmīm vanam mayā sārddhamasi prapannaḥ |
tadāspadam prāpya tayātiroṣāt soḍhāsmi na tvadbhavane vasantī || 14-63

14-63. It appears to me that at the time of our going to the forest you had taken me along but had left behind the deity of the kingdom, known as 'Rajya-Laxmi', which had annoyed the latter much, and she had become jealous of me so much so that when we came back the deity decided to take revenge upon me. She planned my ouster and exile for the second time so that she would have sole power over you, and make you attracted towards her by her services and offerings of royal comforts and pleasures to you.

{Just like two swords can't fit in the same scabbard, so likewise the royal deity decided to eject me so that she can have free and unhindered access to you. By me out

of the way, you too will be free to enjoy all the comforts and pleasures she has to offer you.}

[Note--This observation by Sita shows the pain of her heart. She has made sarcastic remarks against Lord Ram in a veiled tone. She primarily says that with her out of the way, the Lord would be able to court other women and enjoy their company. When Laxman conveyed this message to Lord Ram, he must have squirmed in shame and regretted a lot. It is this reason that after Sita's abandonment, Lord Ram led a sad and forlorn life, detached from everything. He never indulged in pleasures of the senses, practiced self-restraint and renunciation. He would go about his duties in a mechanical manner, and spent his time doing Aswamedha Yagya, or the horse sacrifices as if to atone for his mistake and error in decision. Sita chided Lord Ram in different ways, and clearly hinted at the infamy that Lord Ram has brought upon himself by abandoning her. It would be clear as we read on.]

Verse no. 64:

**निशाचरोपप्लुतभर्तृकाणाम् तपस्विनीनाम् भवतः प्रसादात्।
भूत्वा शरण्या शरणार्थमन्यम् कथम् प्रपत्स्ये त्वयि दीप्यमाने ॥ १४-६४**

niśācaropaplutabhartṛkāṇām tapasvinīnām bhavataḥ prasādāt |
bhūtvā śaraṇyā śaraṇārthamanyam katham prapatsye tvayi dīpyamāne ||
14-64

14-64. During our forest exile, I had given shelter in our hermitage to many pious ladies whose hermit husbands had been subjected to terror by the demons (and so out of fear they came to live with me for protection and safety). Now, tell me, with what face would I go and beg for shelter with them, for all know that I am your queen, and how disgraceful it would be for you (when they come to know why I am seeking shelter in their hermitages).

Verse no. 65:

**किंवा तवात्यन्तवियोगमोघे कुर्यामुपेक्षाम् हतजीवितेऽस्मिन्।
स्याद्रक्षणीयम् यदि मे न तेजः तदीयमन्तर्गतमन्तरायः ॥ १४-६५**

kiṁvā tavātyantaviyogamoghe kuryāmupekṣām hatajīvite'smin |
syādrakṣaṇīyam yadi me na tejaḥ tadyamantargatamantarāyaḥ || 14-65

14-65. Had it not been necessary to preserve my embryo that harbours a spark of new life with which you had blessed me, I would have preferred to end this wretched life that has separated me from you; it is not worth living any more.

Verse no. 66:

**साहम् तपः सूर्यनिविष्टदृष्टिः ऊर्ध्वम् प्रसूतेश्चरितुम् यतिष्ये।
भूयो यथा मे जननान्तरेऽपि त्वमेव भर्ता न च विप्रयोगः ॥ १४-६६**

sāham tapaḥ sūryaniviṣṭadṛṣṭiḥ ūrdhvam prasūteścaritum yaṭiṣye |
bhūyo yathā me janāntare'pi tvameva bhartā na ca viprayogaḥ || 14-66

14-66. Once my son is born, I shall do severe penance by focusing my attention on the sun so that I am further purified, and I shall ask a boon from the sun-god that in my next life I once again become your wife and never be separated from you.

Verse no. 67:

नृपस्य वर्णाश्रमपालनम् यत् स एव धर्मो मनुना प्रतीतः।
निर्वासिताप्येवमतस्त्वयाहम् तपस्विसामान्यमवेक्षणीया ॥ १४-६७

nṛpasya varṇāśramapālanam yat sa eva dharmo manunā pratītaḥ |
nirvāsitāpyevamatastvayāham tapasvisāmānyamavekṣaṇīyā || 14-67

14-67. In ancient time, Manu had classified the society into four segments, and he ordained that the second segment known as the 'Kshatriya' class, to which rulers and kings belong, including yourself, has a primary duty to give protection to and take care of all those who depend upon them or seek their shelter. Since you too belong to this class, and though you had abandoned me yet I am still one of your subjects, you must take care of me and extend your protection to me, specially because now I shall be living a hermit's life which even the scriptures say must be granted protection and care by a king."

Verse no. 68:

तथेति तस्याः प्रतिगृह्य वाचम् रामानुजे दृष्टिपथम् व्यतीते।
सा मुक्तकण्ठम् व्यसनातिभारा च्चक्रन्द विग्ना कुररीव भूयः ॥ १४-६८

tatheti tasyāḥ pratigrhya vācam rāmānuje dṛṣṭipatham vyatīte |
sā muktakaṇṭham vyasanātibhārā ccakranda vīgnā kurarīva bhūyaḥ || 14-68

14-68. When Sita had finished, Laxman promised her that he would convey whatever she has said to Lord Ram. After that, as soon as Laxman went out of sight, Sita was struck with grief and loneliness. Burdened with misery, she burst out crying, wailing and lamenting loudly like a female osprey in great distress.

Verse no. 69:

नृत्यम् मयूराः कुसुमानि वृक्षा दर्भानुपात्तान्विजहुर्हरिण्यः।
तस्याः प्रपन्ने समदुःखभावम् अत्यन्तमासीद्रुदितम् वनेऽपि ॥ १४-६९

nṛtyam mayūrāḥ kusumāni vṛkṣā darbhānupāttānvijahurhariṇyaḥ |
tasyāḥ prapanne samaduḥkhabhāvam atyantamāsīdruditam vane'pi || 14-69

14-69. Hearing loud wails and lamentations of Sita, the peacocks stopped dancing, the trees shed tears in the form of flowers, and the female deer dropped the blades of

grass which they had in their mouths with the intention of eating them. In this symbolic way, the whole forest became gloomy and began to express its solidarity with Sita by joining her in her moment of grief and distress.

Verse no. 70:

तामभ्यगच्छद्रुदितानुकारी कविः कुशेध्माहरणाय यातः।

निषादविद्धान्जददर्शनोत्थः श्लोकत्वमापद्यत यस्य शोकः ॥ १४-७०

tāmabhyagacchadruditānukārī kaviḥ kuśedhmāharaṇāya yātaḥ |
niṣādaviddhāṇḍajadarśanotthaḥ ślokatvamaṇpadyata yasya śokaḥ || 14-70

14-70. The exalted sage renowned for his sense of mercy for those who are in distress, and who was so moved by the agony of a crane when it was struck by the arrow of a hunter that he composed his first verse in Sanskrit to express his distress¹, i.e. sage Valmiki, was out of his hermitage to collect firewood and kusha grass for his religious practices. He heard the wails and lamentations of Sita, and followed in the direction from where the sound came, and finally reached her.

[Note--¹The story is this: One day, sage Valmiki went to the banks of river Tamsa with sage Bharadwaj for his daily bath. While leisurely walking along the bank of the river, he observed that an osprey couple, a male and a female, were frolicking around and making love with each other. At that moment a hunter shot the male osprey dead. The female partner wailed and grieved in utter distress. The sight of the distraught female bird's agonised wail and the cruelty of the hunter moved Valmiki so much that he uttered his first verse in a poetic style or meter called 'Anushtup Chanda'. He cursed the hunter and the verse came out in perfect meter of a Sanskrit verse. It said: 'Oh you cruel fowler! May you not have peace of mind forever because you have killed an innocent bird while it was enjoying the pleasures of life with its partner.' {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 15.}]

Soon the creator Brahma appeared before him and said that it was because of a divine inspiration that he did so. Brahma then instructed Valmiki to compose the story of Lord Ram in the same metrical style as his first utterance while cursing the fowler. Brahma further promised him that he would ensure that his composition would have no rival or parallel in the world. Since the story of the Ramayana was first written in the form of a poetry by sage Valmiki, he has been called the 'adi-kavi', the first and the primary poet who had composed the epic story of Lord Ram known as the Ramayana. The basic structure of this story was provided to Valmiki by sage Narad. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 43.}]

Verse no. 71:

तमश्रु नेत्रावरणम् प्रमृज्य सीता विलापादिवरता ववन्दे।

तस्यै मुनिर्दोहदलिङ्गदर्शी दाश्वान्सुपुत्राशिषमित्युवाच ॥ १४-७१

tamaśru netrāvaraṇam pramṛjya sītā vilāpādivratā vavande |
tasyai munirdohadaliṅgadarśī dāśvānsuputrāśiṣamityuvāca || 14-71

14-71. When Sita saw sage Valmiki, she was at once stopped weeping and lamenting, and wiped off the tears that had hitherto clouded her eyes (because she was now assured of protection and safety). She bowed reverentially before the sage who, upon observing signs of her pregnancy, blessed her to the effect that she may have good sons.

[Note--Sita was well acquainted with sage Valmiki as she had met him during her outward journey to the forest with Lord Ram and Laxman. It was this sage who had advised Lord Ram to establish his hermitage at Chitrakoot. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 132.]

Verse no. 72:

जाने विसृष्टाम् प्रणिधानतस्त्वाम् मिथ्यापवादक्षुभितेन भर्त्रा।
तन्मा व्यथिष्ठा विषयान्तरस्थम् प्राप्तासि वैदेहि पितुर्निकेतम् ॥ १४-७२

jāne visṛṣṭām praṇidhānatastvām mithyāpavādakṣubhitena bhartrā |
tanmā vyathiṣṭhā viṣayāntarastham prāptāsi vaidehi piturniketam || 14-72

14-72. Sage Valmiki said comfortingly to Sita: "Dear daughter! By the virtue of my spiritual powers and divine intuition I have come to know that your husband (Lord Ram) had abandoned you on false accusations by getting worried about his reputation. Oh Vaidehi (i.e. Sita, daughter of king Vaideha of Janakpur)! Don't worry at all, and treat this place (as well as my hermitage) as an outpost of your father, as one of your father's another home. {Don't grieve and treat me as your father, and rest assured that you would be well cared for.}

Verse no. 73:

उत्खातलोकत्रयकण्टकेऽपि सत्यप्रतिज्ञ्येऽप्यविकत्थनेऽपि।
त्वाम् प्रत्यकस्मात्कलुषप्रवृत्ता वस्त्येव मन्युर्भरताग्रजे मे ॥ १४-७३

utkhātalokatrayakaṇṭake'pi satyapratijñye'pyavikatthane'pi |
tvām pratyakasmātkaluṣapravṛttā vastyeva manyurbharatāgraje me || 14-73

14-73. Though Lord Ram is very upright and honourable, though he is committed to eliminate grief and suffering of all the three divisions of world (i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world), though he is very steadfast in upholding his words of honour, and though he never boasts about his achievements and goodness, yet the way he has rudely treated you has ignited anger against him in my heart, and I deeply resent his behaviour.

[Note--It is evident that sage Valmiki was very angry at Lord Ram, and he would have cursed him in the same way as he had once cursed a fowler who shot dead a male crane which caused its female partner grieve and cry inconsolably. This episode is cited in verse no. 70 herein above. But when the sage discovered that Sita was pregnant, he somehow controlled himself and refrained from casting a devastating

curse on Lord Ram, as it would have a negative bearing on his offspring who was about to take a birth.]

Verse no. 74:

**तवोरुकीर्तिः श्वशुरः सखा मे सताम् भवोच्छेदकरः पिता ते।
धुरि स्थिता त्वम् पतिदेवतानाम् किम् तन्न येनासि ममानुकम्प्या ॥ १४-७४**

tavorukīrtiḥ śvaśuraḥ sakhā me satām bhavocchedakaraḥ pitā te |
dhuri sthitā tvam patidevatānām kim tanna yenāsi mamānukampyā || 14-74

14-74. Your famous late father-in-law (king Dashrath) was my friend, and your father (king Janak) is highly enlightened and wise, teaching spiritualism and principles of metaphysics to others so that they can find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and you yourself are foremost amongst women who are chaste, immaculate in character and loyal to their husbands. So therefore, there is no reason why I should not treat you with compassion and mercy (and it is my moral responsibility to help you in times of your distress).

Verse no. 75:

**तपस्विसंसर्गविनीतसत्त्वे तपोवने वीतभया वसास्मिन्।
इतो भविष्यत्यनघप्रसूतेः अपत्यसंस्कारमयोविधिस्ते ॥ १४-७५**

tapasvisamsargavinītasattve tapovane vītabhayā vasāsmiṇ |
ito bhaviṣyatyanaghaprasūteḥ apatyasaṁskāramayovidhiste || 14-75

14-75. Look around and see that even wild animals have become so tamed and polite by living alongside pious sages and hermits. Neither the sages and hermits nor these animals disturb or harm anyone. You will also stay without any kind of fear in my hermitage, and when your children are born then all their birth rituals and their education would be properly taken care of.

Verse no. 76:

**अशून्यतीराम् मुनिसंनिवेशैः तमोनिहन्त्रीम् तमसाम् वगाहय।
तत्सैकतोत्सङ्गबलिक्रियाभिः संपत्स्यते ते मनसः प्रसादः ॥ १४-७६**

aśūnyatīrām munisaṁniveśaiḥ tamonihantrīm tamasām vagāhya |
tatsaikatotsaṅgabalikriyābhiḥ saṁpatsyate te manasaḥ prasādaḥ || 14-76

14-76. This Tamsa river has clean and rejuvenating water which dispels sins by bathing in it. Sages and hermits come here for their daily rituals and offering worship to their respective deities. So likewise, you too come here daily to perform your rituals and offer worship to your family deity which would give you peace of mind, make you feel happy and contented, and help you overcome grief.

Verse no. 77:

पुष्पम् फलम् चार्तवमाहरन्त्यो बीजम् च बालेयमकृष्टरोहि ।
विनोदयिष्यन्ति नवाभिषङ्गाम् उदारवाचो मुनिकन्यकास्त्वाम् ॥ १४-७७

puṣpam phalam cārtavamāharantyo bījam ca bāleyamakṛṣṭarohi |
vinodayiṣyanti navābhiṣaṅgām udāravāco munikanyakāstvām || 14-77

14-77. The young daughters of hermits and sages who live around this place would give you good company. They would bring seasonal fruits and flowers for you, as well as the grains and other things that would be needed for your daily worship rituals. Their sweet talk would keep you engaged and entertained.

{Further, you will be able to enjoy freedom of the countryside and the invigorating environment of the surrounding Nature, something you would have missed in your royal palace with its innumerable restrictions and protocols. Hence, treat this misfortune as a blessing in disguise that has enabled you to break free from shackles, and live a free life of enjoyment amidst the pleasures of Mother Nature.}

Verse no. 78:

पयोघटैराश्रमबालवृक्षान् संवर्धयन्ती स्वबालानुरूपैः ।
असंशयम् प्राक्तनयोपपत्तेः स्तनंधयप्रीतिमवाप्स्यसि त्वम् ॥ १४-७८

payoghaṭairāśramabālavṛkṣān saṁvardhayantī svabalānurūpaiḥ |
asaṁśayam prāktanayopapatteḥ stanāndhayapṛitimavāpsyasi tvam || 14-78

14-78. Pick up whichever pitchers of water you can comfortably lift and water the plants of the hermitage. This will give you a lot of joy, keep you engaged, and teach you what pleasure there is in watering and tending helpless plants, which in turn would train you to affectionately look after and feed your children till they grow up and can tend for themselves."

{In this way, the fatherly sage Valmiki comforted Sita and removed all her grief. She felt happy and cheerfully accompanied the sage to his hermitage.}

Verse no. 79:

अनुग्रहप्रत्यभिनन्दिनीम् ताम् वाल्मीकिरादाय दयाद्रचेताः ।
सायम् मृगाध्यासितवेदिपार्श्वम् स्वमाश्रमम् शान्तमृगम् निनाय ॥ १४-७९

anugrahapratyabhinandinīm tām vālmīkirādāya dayādracetāḥ |
sāyam mṛgādhyāsitaavedipārśvam svamāśramam śāntamṛgam nināya || 14-79

14-79. Sita accompanied the tender hearted, compassionate and merciful sage Valmiki to his hermitage. By now it was evening, and she saw an amazing sight that in the hermitage, where the sage had his worship altar, many kinds of animals, such as deer and even lions, had assembled and were lying around lazily with half-closed eyes as if dozing off to sleep.

{After roaming around in the forest during the day, these animals would assemble at the sage's hermitage to pass the night sleeping quietly. This ensured that no other wild animal from some other place would attack the sage during the night. During winters, the fire of the altar would also give warmth to these animals. What a fantastic scene it was indeed! It was a proof of the sage's piety and holiness that even those animals, who by nature are considered dangerous and flesh-eating predators, would come to lie down around the sage like domesticated pet animals.}

Verse no. 80:

तामर्पयामास च शोकदीनाम् तदागमप्रीतिषु तापसीषु।
निर्विष्टसाराम् पितृभिर्हिमांशोः न्त्याम् कलाम् दर्श इवौषधीषु ॥ १४-८०

tāmarpayāmāsa ca śokadīnām tadāgamapṛītiṣu tāpasīṣu |
nirviṣṭasārām pitṛbhirhimāṁśoḥ ntyām kalām darśa ivauṣadhīṣu || 14-80

14-80. Just like the last remaining fraction of the cool nectar of the moon that is symbolised by its soothing moon-light is stored in the herbs during the night of the dark moon (while the rest of its cool and soothing nectar have been sucked up by different deities during the previous fourteen days from the full moon night till the dark moon night), so likewise sage Valmiki preserved the remnants of Sita's happiness by handing her custody to the ladies of the hermitages (i.e. his own hermitage and those of other sages around his own) so that they can all look after her comfort and make her feel at home collectively).

[Note--Sita's happiness and joys were exhausted when she was abandoned by Lord Ram. But whatever little hope of joy in life that was still left in her heart by the twin prospects of having children and living the rest of her life in some kind of safety was preserved by sage Valmiki when he brought Sita to his hermitage.]

Verse no. 81:

ता इङ्गुदीस्नेहकृतप्रदीपम् आस्तीर्णमेध्याजिनतल्पमन्तः।
तस्यै सपर्यानुपदम् दिनान्ते निवासहेतोरुजम् वितेरुः ॥ १४-८१

tā iṅgudīśnehakṛtapradīpam āstīrṇamedhyājīnatalpamantaḥ |
tasyai saparyānupadam dinānte nivāśahetoruṭajam viteruḥ || 14-81

14-81. After the completion of evening worship rituals, the ladies of the hermitage gave a cottage to Sita to live comfortably. A lamp of oil extracted from the Ingudi tree¹ was burning inside, and the floor was covered by the hide of deer.

[Note--¹The Ingudi tree is called Nagelia Putranjiva. It is a tree whose fruits contain a large percentage of oil which was extracted by ancient sages for use in lamps, and various other house-hold purposes. The fruits were made into and worn as necklace particularly by females as they were supposed to possess life-giving virtues, hence its botanical name. Females wore it so that they can be blessed with children so that the lineage of the sage could be continued.]

Verse no. 82:

तत्राभिषेकप्रयता वसन्ती प्रयुक्तपूजा विधिनातिथिभ्यः।

वन्येन सा वल्कलिनी शरीरम् पत्युः प्रजासंततये बभार ॥ १४-८२

tatrābhiṣekaprayatā vasantī prayuktapūjā vidhinātithibhyaḥ |
vanyena sā valkalinī śarīram patyuh prajāsaṁtataye babhāra || 14-82

14-82. In the hermitage, Sita lived a very pious and regulated life like other female hermits. She would bathe daily in the morning, and would welcome and serve guests who came to visit sage Valmiki. She covered her body with rough jute clothes like other female hermits, and ate very frugal meals consisting of fruits and roots just enough to sustain life in her body so that her child can be born to ensure that her husband's family lineage can continue.

[Note--This kind of life was not new for Sita as she had lived this way for fourteen years of Lord Ram's exile in the forest. So she was very comfortable with it.]

Verse no. 83:

अपि प्रभुः सानुशयोऽधुना स्यात् किमुत्सुकः शक्रजितोऽपि हन्ता।

शशंस सीतापरिदेवनान्तम् अनुष्ठितम् शासनमग्रजाय ॥ १४-८३

api prabhuḥ sānuśayo'dhunā syāt kimutsukaḥ śakrajito'pi hantā |
śaśaṁsa sītāparidevanāntam anuṣṭhitam śāsanamagrajāya || 14-83

14-83. When Laxman returned home to Ayodhya, he told Lord Ram everything that Sita had said to him while weeping bitterly. Laxman wished to see if Lord Ram would regret or remained unmoved about his decision, and whether or not he would make some amends after he heard the way Sita had wailed and lamented pitifully.

Verse no. 84:

बभूव रामः सहसा सबाष्पः तुषारवर्षीव सहस्यचन्द्रः।

कौलीनभीतेन गृहान्निरस्ता न तेन वैदेहसुता मनस्तः ॥ १४-८४

babhūva rāmaḥ sahasā sabāṣpaḥ tuṣāravarṣīva sahasyacandraḥ |
kaulīnabhītena grhānnirastā na tena vaidehasutā manastāḥ || 14-84

14-84. Upon hearing Sita's pitiful message as conveyed by Laxman, tears rolled down Lord Ram's eyes like dew drops during the moon lit nights of the Paus̥h months (i.e. December-January)¹ (indicating that Lord Ram was overwhelmed with sorrow, grief and regret). This is because he had not abandoned Sita due to any personal grudge, but only to prevent any kind of taint on his character and reputation.

[Note--¹During the cold winter nights, especially during full moon nights, dew forms on the ground and drips from leaves, flowers, grass blades, and covers vast tracts of

green fields. Everything becomes moist. Likewise, Lord Ram's eyes shed tears and became moist when he heard Sita's pitiful message.]

Verse no. 85:

निगृह्य शोकम् स्वयमेव धीमान् वर्णाश्रमावेक्षणजागरूकः।
स भ्रातृसाधारणभोगमृद्धम् राज्यम् रजोरिक्तमनाः शशास ॥ १४-८५

nigṛhya śokam svayameva dhīmān varṇāśramāvekṣaṇajāgarūkaḥ |
sa bhrāṭṛsādhāraṇabhogamṛddham rājyam rajoriktamanāḥ śaśāsa || 14-85

14-85. Thereafter, Lord Ram became very reserved and lived a life of renunciation. He was wise and sagacious, he upheld the rules of life as ordained for the four segments of the society, known as 'varnashram dharma', by ancient scriptures, and he had no trace of having any kind of desire for sensual pleasures. Along with his brothers, he engaged himself in looking after the affairs of his prosperous kingdom in a judicious manner.

Verse no. 86:

तामेकभार्याम् परिवादभीरोः साध्वीमपि त्यक्तवतो नृपस्य।
वक्षस्यसंघट्टसुखम् वसन्ती रेजे सपत्नीरहितेव लक्ष्मीः ॥ १४-८६

tāmekabhāryām parivādabhīroḥ sādhvīmapi tyaktavato nṛpasya |
vakṣasyasaṅghaṭṭasukham vasantī reje sapatnīrahiteva lakṣmīḥ || 14-86

14-86. With Sita out of the way, it appeared that the female deity of the kingdom came to occupy Lord Ram's heart after he had abandoned his loyal and immaculate wife out of fear of infamy and scandalous gossiping regarding his character. The deity found this vacancy in the Lord's heart, and immediately occupied it to live happily there. {This is why the Lord forgot about Sita and became engaged whole-heartedly in the affairs of the kingdom.}

[Note--Refer verse no. 63 of this Canto 14 herein above.]

Verse no. 87:

सीताम् हित्वा दशमुखरिपुर्नोपमेये यदन्याम्
तस्या एव प्रतिकृतिसखो यत्क्रतूनाजहार।
वृत्तान्तेन श्रवणविषयप्रापिणा तेन भर्तुः सा
दुर्वारम् कथमपि परित्यागदुःखम् विषेहे ॥ १४-८७

sītām hitvā daśamukharipurnopameye yadanyām
tasyā eva pratikṛtisakho yatkratūnājahāra |
vṛttāntena śravaṇaviṣayaprāpiṇā tena bhartuḥ sā
durvāram kathamapi parityāgadukham viṣehe || 14-87

14-87. After abandoning Sita, Lord Ram did not marry again. On the contrary, he always treated her with the greatest of respect. In fact, during the many Aswamedha Yagya (horse sacrifices) that he performed later on in life, he would keep a golden idol of Sita to his left to represent her as it was necessary that the chief patron of such sacrifices must have his wife with him to make the rituals successful.

When this news reached Sita-- that Lord Ram had not re-married, and that he had a golden idol of Sita sit by his side during the conduct of the rituals of the horse sacrifices-- she felt very relieved and glad that after all the Lord continued to treat her as his wife, that he had not lost his love for her, and that he remained loyal to her as she was to him. This very thought was very reassuring for Sita, and her grief, that had hitherto been intolerable, was now bearable and less tormenting.

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये त्रयोदशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye caturdaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends the 14th chapter of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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Kalidas—Raghuvansham, Chapter (Sarga) 15, verse nos. 1-105:

Concluding chapter of the Ramayana of Kalidas

Lord Ram did not re-marry after abandoning Sita. One day, sages residing near the river Yamuna came to him and said that a demon named Lavnasur had been tormenting them and creating a hindrance in their religious practices; they sought help from the Lord against this nuisance. Lord Ram sent his younger brother Shatrughan to take care of the matter. Lord Ram blessed his brother and asked him to stop-over at hermitages of sage that fall on his way and find out about their welfare.

Shatrughan spent the first night at sage Valmiki's hermitage where the sage extended warm hospitality to him. On the same night, Sita gave birth to her twin sons. Shatrughan was mightily pleased at this news. The next day, he took leave of the sage and proceeded on his journey.

When Shatrughan reached the city of Madhuvan, just at that time Lavnasur, who was the son of Ravana's sister Kumbhinasi, had returned after hunting wild animals. Shatrughan observed that the demon had no weapon in his hands at that moment as he held dead animals with both his hands. So, Shatrughan thought it was a good opportunity, and he attacked Lavnasur. A fierce duel took place between the two, but ultimately Shatrughan slayed the demon and sent him to hell.

The sages who had asked protection from this demon were very pleased, and they profusely blessed Shatrughan. Thereafter, he established a city called Mathura on the banks of river Yamuna where noble and honourable people came to live in peace.

Meanwhile, sage Valmiki, being a friend of kings Dashrath and Janak, attended to Sita like a father would attend to his daughter after her two sons were born. The sage performed all the rituals and necessary religious duties to baptise the two sons in a proper and systematic way. The sage had used the hairs at the end of the tail of a cow to clean the newly born first child, and he had used kusha grass to do the

same for the second child. This is why he named the first and the elder son as 'Lava', and the second son as 'Kusha'.

Though the two sons were born immediately one after the other, and the sage had to get them cleaned almost simultaneously, so the question as to who was elder is difficult to answer precisely. Some accounts say that Lava was elder, while others say Kusha was elder. But according to Kalidas' version, it is clear that Lava was born a few seconds earlier than Kusha. {Refer verse no. 32.}

When the two boys grew up under the care of the compassionate sage Valmiki, he taught them all aspects of the scriptures and religious doctrines, as well as martial art. The sage also taught them the story of the Ramayana that he himself had written as part of their education in literature as well as to make them aware of their noble lineage. The boys would sing the story of the Ramayana as taught to them by the sage before their mother to entertain her and keep her amused.

While returning to Ayodhya, Shatrughan skipped the sage's hermitage to avoid giving him trouble. He reached Ayodhya and told Lord Ram everything about the success of his assignment. The Lord was very pleased. But Shatrughan did not tell the Lord anything about the birth of his two sons in the hermitage of sage Valmiki because the sage had asked him not to do so, saying that when the right time comes he would himself go and hand over the two sons to Lord Ram.

After the passage of some time, Lord Ram performed a horse sacrifice. Since it was not proper to conduct this ritual without the presence of his wife by his side, the great sages and learned scholars who had assembled at the venue advised that a golden idol of Sita be used to represent her.

Meanwhile, the two young brothers, Lava and Kusha, learnt the story of the Ramayana by heart as taught to them by sage Valmiki, their teacher, and they would roam around singing in melodious tune the verses of the epic. Their singing was absolutely charming, and with their attire of hermit-sons, they captivated the mind and imagination of people wherever they went. This news reached the ears of Lord Ram. The Lord called them and listened to their song with rapt attention in a full court. The simple hermit like attire of the two boys, their charming appearance, and their heart-touching rendering of the story of the Ramayana mesmerised Lord Ram as well as all those who were present there. The Lord was stunned at the resemblance that the two boys had with him, except that they were attired like forest dwellers and were young, while the Lord was dressed in royal robes and was an adult. When the two boys politely returned the gift or the reward that Lord Ram gave them, it astonished everyone.

When the Lord enquired from them who was their teacher, who taught them this singing, who had composed the verses they were singing, the two innocent children replied that it was sage Valmiki.

Lord Ram took all his other brothers along and went to meet sage Valmiki. After formal greetings, the sage told him that the two boys were his own sons, and now he should accept Sita along with her sons. Lord Ram replied: "Oh revered sage! Sita had already undergone the fire-test to prove her purity in Lanka itself, but the subjects of my kingdom don't believe it because of Ravana's corrupt reputation. So therefore, if Sita can once again prove her purity and innocence by undergoing another test, I am ready to accept her and her two sons."

Sage Valmiki went to Lord Ram's court the next day along with Sita and the two brothers, Lava and Kusha. The entire court was struck with shame and grief that they had falsely accused this honourable and upright lady with something so abhorable and condemnable as impurity of character, disloyalty and dishonesty.

Sage Valmiki instructed his disciples to bring a little water of the holy river Ganges and a small tuft of kusha grass. He then told Sita: "My daughter, prove your integrity and purity before this whole court to set at rest all misgivings and controversies for all times to come."

To obey the sage's instructions, Sita opened her palms and filled it with water of the Ganges while holding the tuft of the kusha grass in her fingers. She then made a solemn pledge: "If I had never broken my vows of remaining loyal to my husband, and had never ever violated chastity, integrity, purity and immaculacy of character, then oh Mother Earth, please accept me in your laps by opening a way for me so that I can disappear in your bowls forever."

No sooner had Sita made this proclamation then the earth opened up, and a splendorous throne emerged from its bowls with the deity representing Mother Earth herself sitting on it. The deity welcomed Sita on her lap, and immediately the throne sank into the earth, and the hole on the surface through which it had appeared closed for all times to come.

Somehow, Lord Ram completed the ongoing horse sacrifice and bid everyone goodbye. Lord Ram assigned Bharat the kingdom of Sindhu. Bharat vanquished the gandharvas and split the kingdom into two, giving his two sons, named Taksha and Pushkal, the two newly formed kingdoms that now onwards would bear their names.

On the instructions of Lord Ram, Laxman made his two sons, named Angad and Chitraketu, the rulers of Karapatha. {Shatrughan had already been assigned the kingdom of Mathura.}

One day, Kaal, the deity representing the end of one's life in this world, came to Lord Ram and requested the Lord to return to his original abode in the heaven, called Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu. So therefore, to prepare for his final exit from this world, Lord Ram assigned Kusha the kingdom of Kushaawati, and Lava the kingdom of Sharaawati.

Obeying their father, Lava and Kusha kept the sacred fire in the forefront and went in the northern direction to take charge of their new assignment. Meanwhile, Lord Ram, along with all his brothers, went to the banks of river Saryu, took a final bath in it, and ascended to heaven on a divine plane.

This is the summary of Canto 15, and it also brings to an end the story of the Ramayana as narrated by Kalidas, the famed classical poet of India, in Cantos 10-15 of his composition known as 'Raghuvansham'.

Now, let us start with our reading of the original text as follows:

Verse no. 1:

कृतसीतापरित्यागः स रत्नाकरमेखलाम्।

बुभुजे पृथिवीपालः पृथिवीमेव केवलाम्॥ १५-१

kṛtasītāparityāgaḥ sa ratnākaramekhalām |
bubhuje pṛthivīpālāḥ pṛthivīmeva kevalām|| 15-1

15-1. After abandoning Sita, Lord Ram, the king and the protector of the land surrounded by the ocean, began ruling over his vast realm and enjoying the comforts

and pleasures that were inherent to his stature as the King-Emperor of the world, but he did not marry again.

Verse no. 2:

लवणेन विलुप्तेज्यास्तामिसेण तमभ्ययुः।

मुनयो यमुनाभाजः शरण्यम् शरणार्थिनः॥ १५-२

lavaṇena viluptejyāstāmisreṇa tamabhyayuḥ |
munayo yamunābhājaḥ śaraṇyam śaraṇārthinah|| 15-2

15-2. During this time, one day a group of sages and ascetics who lived on the banks of river Yamuna, came to meet Lord Ram who was a protector of all, and invariably gave his support to those who came to seek refuge with and sought his help. These sages were being tormented by a demon called 'Lavnasur'¹, who routinely defiled their religious rituals and prevented them from pursuing their spiritual practices.

[Note--¹Lavnasur was the son of Ravana's sister Kumbhinasī and a daughter of the demon Madhu. Madhu had performed severe penance by which Lord Shiva was so highly pleased with him that he gave him a trident which possessed the power of turning to ashes anything which it touched. This special power that Madhu's son Lavnasur possessed by the virtue of inheriting his grandfather's trident has been clearly referred to by sages and ascetics in verse no. 5 herein below--when they told Lord Ram that as long as this demon holds this particular trident it is impossible to kill him.]

Verse no. 3:

अवेक्ष्य रामम् ते तस्मिन्न प्रजहुः स्वतेजसा।

त्राणाभावे हि शापास्त्राः कुर्वन्ति तपसो व्ययम्॥ १५-३

avekṣya rāmam te tasminna prajahruḥ svatejasā |
trāṇābhāve hi śāpāstrāḥ kurvanti tapaso vyayam|| 15-3

15-3. When the sages and ascetics saw Lord Ram sitting on the throne, and knew him to be ever-ready to help and protect them whenever the need arose, they decided not to employ their own spiritual powers and mystical abilities to punish the demon Lavnasur by casting their curse on the latter.

They desisted from doing so because they were well aware that each time they would curse someone for any reason whatsoever, the accumulated merits of their long spiritual practices, penances and austerities would get diminished in proportion to the intensity and the effect of the curse cast by them on the offender. So therefore, wise and erudite sages and ascetics would use their abilities and powers to punish their tormentors by cursing them as rarely as possible, and only in cases of emergencies when they found that there was no one to give them respite or protection.

In the present case, since they had Lord Ram there to help and protect them, it was thought prudent not to fritter away or waste their spiritual energy by casting a curse on the demon, and instead to leave the task on Lord Ram¹. [15-3]

[Note—¹Wise and enlightened sages, ascetics and saints do not want to unnecessarily fritter away or waste their spiritual powers and mystical abilities acquired after hard penance and austerities if their aim or objective can be achieved by an alternative means. In this case, when they saw Lord Ram, who was a great protector of sages and holy men, as well as of everything that was pious, holy and righteous, was sitting on the throne, they desisted from employing their own powers to punish the demon. Their wish to refrain from using their own spiritual powers to punish the concerned demon in the presence of Lord Ram also stemmed from their wish not to undermine Lord Ram's authority and reputation as a protector of sages and holy men, for if they went ahead to curse the demon then obviously it would mean that they had no confidence in Lord Ram and his abilities, and that would be a very embarrassing situation. It would be tantamount to insulting Lord Ram and damage his reputation.

Another reason for the sages hesitating or demurring to intervene personally themselves to punish the offender is that with each curse they cast upon the latter, their spiritual powers and mystical abilities got diminished in proportion to the intensity of their curse. It is like the case of someone's reserve fund; if the person uses it unwisely and for unimportant things then his fund would get diminished slowly. Then later on, if he actually lands in trouble and needs funds to tide over his misfortunes, then he would be left high and dry. Hence, they were very particular and cautious in using their powers and abilities. Therefore, wise sages would usually employ their super-natural powers judiciously and with due care, and only in case when they found that there is no alternative available to them to deal with the situation would they intervene.]

Verse no. 4:

प्रतिशुश्राव काकुत्स्थस्तेभ्यो विघ्नप्रतिक्रियाम्।
धर्मसंरक्षणार्थेव प्रवृत्तिर्भुवि शाङ्गिर्गणः॥ १५-४

pratiśuśrāva kākutsthastebhyo vighnapratikriyām |
dharmaśaṁrakṣaṇārtheva pravṛttirbhuvī śāṅgīṇaḥ|| 15-4

15-4. Lord Ram told them not to worry, and promised them that he would eliminate the cause of their troubles and remove the obstacles that they face in pursuing their religious practices, because Lord Vishnu had manifested himself on this earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the demons, offer protection to those who are righteous, noble and pious, and establish the law of Dharma on the land.

[Note--Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

Verse no. 5:

ते रामाय वधोपायमाचख्युर्विबुधदिवषः।
दुर्जयो लवणः शूली विशूलः प्रार्थ्यतामिति॥ १५-५

te rāmāya vadhopāyamācakhyurvibudhadviṣaḥ |
durjayo lavaṇaḥ śūlī viśūlaḥ prārthyatāmiti|| 15-5

5-5. The sages and ascetics told Lord Ram the means of slaying the demon Lavnasur, saying that this demon holds a deadly trident (śūlī viśūlaḥ), and as long as this weapon is in his hand it is well nigh impossible to kill him¹. So therefore, in order to kill him he must be attacked at a time when the trident is not in his hand.

[Note--¹The reason has been outlined as a note of verse no. 2 herein above.]

Verse no. 6:

आदिदेशाथ शत्रुघ्नम् तेषाम् क्षेमाय राघवः।
करिष्यन्निव नामास्य यथार्थमरिनिग्रहात्॥ १५-६

ādideśātha śatrughnam teṣām kṣemāya rāghavaḥ |
kariṣyanniva nāmāsyā yathārthamarinigrahāt|| 15-6

15-6. After that, Lord Ram called his younger brother Shatrughan and assigned to him the task of eliminating the torment of the sages and ascetics by eliminating the demon Lavnasur. The Lord wanted to prove that his brother is true to his name 'Shatrughan', i.e. one who is a vanquisher of enemies.

[Note--Why did Lord Ram select Shatrughan for this job? The answer is given in this verse itself--i.e. the Lord wanted to show to the world that his brother is true to his name, a vanquisher of enemies.]

Verse no. 7:

यः कश्चन रघूणाम् हि परमेकः परंतपः।
अपवाद इवोत्सर्गम् व्यावर्तयितुमीश्वरः॥ १५-७

yaḥ kaścana raghūṇām hi paramekaḥ paramtapah |
apavāda ivotsargam vyāvartayitumīśvaraḥ|| 15-7

15-7. Just as in the field of Sanskrit grammar there are found certain exceptions to the general rule of grammar where the latter fails to become applicable, so likewise amongst all the rulers of the world, the descendants of the Raghu's dynasty stood out like an exception, because whereas other rulers were susceptible to being defeated by a powerful enemy, but no enemy was so powerful that members of Raghu's dynasty could not vanquish or subdue single-handedly.

[Note--As a general rule, during a duel between two powerful adversaries, there was no certainty who would win. But the descendants of the Raghu's dynasty stood out as an exception to this general rule as it was certain that in any such combat they were sure to win.]

Verse no. 8:

अग्रजेन प्रयुक्ताशीस्ततो दाशरथी रथी।

ययौ वनस्थलीः पश्यन्पुष्पिताः सुरभीरभीः॥ १५-८

agrajena prayuktāśīstato dāśarathī rathī |
yayau vanasthalīḥ paśyanpuṣpitāḥ surabhīrabhīḥ|| 15-8

15-8. Having received his elder brother's instructions and blessings, Shatrughan, the son of king Dashrath, mounted a magnificent chariot and proceeded ahead to complete his assignment. On the way he viewed the greenery of the surrounding countryside with its verdant forests, trees bearing fragrant flowers, and lush green fields.

Verse no. 9:

रामादेशादनृगता सेना तस्यार्थसिद्धये।

पश्चादध्यनार्थस्य धातोरधिरिवाभवत्॥ १५-९

rāmādeśādanugatā senā tasyārthasiddhaye |
paścādadhyanārthasya dhātoradhirivābhavat|| 15-9

15-9. The army that followed Shatrughan in accordance with the orders of Lord Ram was superfluous and not actually needed because he alone was enough to subdue and conquer the mightiest of enemies. It is like the case of a prefix 'adhi' that is attached to the word 'gyan' as it seems superfluous because the word for knowledge, i.e. 'gyan', in itself is sufficient to explain what is being aimed to achieve, and there is no special need to attach any prefix to it to highlight its meaning.

[Note--There are primarily two types of knowledge--viz. Adhi-bhautic which pertains to the gross world visible around us on the earth, and Adhi-daivic which pertains to the subtle world of the Gods which is not visible. In both these words, the prefix 'adhi' seems unnecessary because the root word that follows it itself refers to knowledge, albeit of different fields.

So likewise, there was no need of the army to accompany Shatrughan as he himself was competent enough to vanquish the demon Lavnasur.]

Verse no. 10:

आदिष्टवर्त्मा मुनिभिः स गच्छंस्तपसाम् वरः।

विरराज रथप्रष्ठैर्वालखिल्यैरिवांशुमान्॥ १५-१०

ādiṣṭavartmā munibhiḥ sa gacchāṁstapasām varah |
virarāja rathapraṣṭhairvāḥkilyairivāṁśumān|| 15-10

15-10. Just as great sages known as 'Valyakhilya'¹ precede the chariot of the Sun-God from the front, so likewise the sages and ascetics who came to seek help from Lord Ram showed Shatrughan the path to be followed by leading him from the front.

[Note--The Valyakhilya sages in Hinduism are a group of tiny sages, about the size of a thumb, but very powerful in their spiritual power and asceticism which they had achieved by severe penance. They are associated with the sun, travelling alongside it to give the Sun-God protection.]

Verse no. 11:

तस्य मार्गवशादेका बभूव वसतिर्यतः।

रथस्वनोत्कण्ठमृगे वाल्मीकीये तपोवने॥ १५-११

tasya mārgavaśādekā babhūva vasatiryataḥ |
rathasvanotkanṭhamṛge vālmīkiye tapovane|| 15-11

15-11. While Shatrughan was on his way, he came to sage Valmiki's hermitage where he made his first night's halt. The deer of the hermitage stood up and stretched out their necks in amazement when they heard the sound of the chariots of his army as they arrived at the hermitage.

{The area surrounding sage Valmiki's hermitage was calm and peaceful. So the sudden clamour caused by the sound of arriving chariots of Shatrughan's army, with the neighing of horses and the clattering of wheels, surprised the resident animals who were not accustomed to such loud noises. They stood up alarmed and astonished, raising their ears and stiffening their necks to stare in the direction from which the army arrived. But soon they relaxed when they discovered that those who came did not mean any harm to them, but were friendly in nature.}

Verse no. 12:

तमृषिः पूजयामास कुमारम् क्लान्तवाहनम्।

तपःप्रभावसिद्धाभिर्विशेषप्रतिपत्तिभिः॥ १५-१२

tamṛṣiḥ pūjayāmāsa kumāram klāntavāhanam |
tapaḥprabhāvasiddhābhirviśeṣapratipattibhiḥ || 15-12

15-12. The horses and soldiers of Shatrughan's army were tired, so he thought it prudent to give them a bit of rest for the night by making a halt at sage Valmiki's hermitage. {Besides this, it was also proper to pay a courtesy visit to the sage while he was passing that way, and enquire about his sister-in-law Sita's well-being.}

Sage Valmiki used his mystical powers to arrange all things necessary for hosting Shatrughan and his army. So they were made comfortable and well looked after during their night halt at the sage's hermitage¹.

[Note--¹Ancient sages had this kind of supernatural power that they could create any kind of luxurious settings to entertain their guests lavishly, miraculously as if out of thin air. This is evident in another context when Bharat visited sage Bharadwaj's hermitage en-route to Chitrakoot to meet Lord Ram and try to convince him to return home and accept the crown. He was accompanied by a huge company of people including soldiers and other wings of the army, royal family members, the royal priest sage Vashistha, ministers and courtiers, servants and goods carriers, etc. When they

made a night halt at sage Bharadwaj's hermitage, the sage invoked his mystical powers to extend a warm and lavish hospitality to everyone, providing for their lavish lodging, sumptuous food, and all other necessities of life which astonished everyone because the sage himself lived a very simple and frugal way of life, and to arrange for such a lavish reception was nothing short of a miracle. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 212-to Doha no. 215.]

Verse no. 13:

**तस्यामेवास्य यामिन्यामन्तर्वन्ती प्रजावती।
सुतावसूत संपन्नौ कोशदण्डाविव क्षितिः॥ १५-१३**

tasyāmevāśya yāminyāmantarvantī prajāvatī |
sutāvasūta saṁpannau kośadaṇḍāviva kṣitiḥ|| 15-13

15-13. During the same night when Shatrughan was staying at sage Valmiki's hermitage, his sister-in-law Sita gave birth to two glorious and wonderful sons just like the deity of the earth produces wealth and prosperity as well as sustains a successful army for a noble king who rules over the land in an honourable manner.

[Note--We shall read in due course that though Shatrughan knew that Sita had given birth to two sons, he did not inform Lord Ram about them when he returned to Ayodhya after successfully completing his assignment of eliminating the demon Lavnasur. It is because sage Valmiki had told him not to inform Lord Ram about the birth of his two sons. Refer verse no. 41 herein below.]

Verse no. 14:

**संतानश्रवणाद्भ्रातुः सौमित्रिः सौमनस्यवान्।
प्राञ्जलिर्मुनिमामन्त्र्य प्रातर्युक्तरथो ययौ॥ १५-१४**

saṁtānaśravaṇādbhrātuḥ saumitriḥ saumanasyavān |
prāñjalirmunimāmantrya prātaryuktaratho yayau|| 15-14

15-14. When Shatrughan heard of the two sons being born to his brother Lord Ram, he felt very happy and gratified. The next day, he held the palms of his folded hands together and bowed before sage Valmiki to take his leave, and proceeded on his onwards journey.

Verse no. 15:

**स च प्राप मधूपघ्नम् कुम्भीनस्याश्च कुक्षिजः।
वनात्करमिवादाय सत्त्वरशिमुपस्थितः॥ १५-१५**

sa ca prāpa madhūpaghnam kumbhīnasyāśca kuṣṣijah |
vanātkaramivādāya sattvarāśimupasthitaḥ || 15-15

15-15. At the time when Shatrughan reached the city of Madhuvan (also known as Madhupvan; 'madhūpaghnam'), the demon Lavnasur, who was the son of Ravana's sister Kumbhinasī, had just returned with a lot of animals that he had killed as game in the forest, dangling from both his hands. It appeared that these games had been collected by him as tax from the deity of the forest (*vanātkara*), and therefore he did not wish to leave behind even a single game even though both his hands were full of dead animals.

{Both his hands were full of dead animals as he had heaped all the game and lifted them in his two hands because he was so greedy that he did not wish to leave behind even a single carcass, leaving no space for him to carry his own weapon, the trident.}

Verse no. 16:

धूमधूमो वसागन्धी ज्वालाबभ्रुशिरोरुहः।

क्रव्याद्गणपरीवारश्चिताग्निरिव जंगमः॥ १५-१६

dhūmadhūmro vasāgandhī jvālābabhruśīroruḥ |
kravyādgṇaparīvāraścitāgniriva jaṅgamaḥ || 15-16

15-16. Lavnasur's complexion was like a dark cloud; stench of raw flesh emanated from his body; the unkempt hairs on his head spread in all the directions and swayed wildly as he walked like tongues of a raging fire; and demons who relished eating raw meat walked all around him.

In this fearful way he presented a repulsive and disgusting sight that resembled a cremation ground's unattended funeral fire around which cadaver eating animals such as dogs and birds such as vultures hover around.

[Note--In this analogy, Lavnasur is likened to the funeral pyre from which flames are leaping up because of his complexion, flaming hairs and stench emanating from his body, and his accompanying demons to the cadaver eating animals and birds that flock all around this pyre in the hope of grabbing a piece of un-burnt flesh. These demons would lunge forward and grab any dead animal or its part that might fall from the hands of Lavnasur just like the dogs and vultures try to snap up small bits of dead body which might be left half burnt.]

Verse no. 17:

अपशूलम् तमासाद्य लवणम् लक्ष्मणानुजः।

रुरोध संमुखीनो हि जयो रन्ध्रप्रहारिणाम्॥ १५-१७

apaśūlam tamāsādyā lavaṇam lakṣmaṇānujaḥ |
rurōdha saṁmukhīno hi jayo randhraprahāriṇām || 15-17

15-17. When Laxman's younger brother Shatrughan (*lakṣmaṇānujaḥ*) observed that the demon did not have his trident (*apaśūlam*)¹ in his hands (because they were loaded with carcasses of hunted animals), he got a chance to attack Lavnasur, because

it is a standard strategy of warfare that if one attacks an enemy when the latter is unarmed and unprepared, then victory is sure to come.

[Note--¹The word ' apaśūlam ' refers to a pointed dagger, spear or lancet like weapon. It also refers to a trident as it too has pointed ends, albeit three instead of one like a dagger, a spear or a lancet. Lavnasur had inherited this trident from his grandfather Madhu, who had been gifted this weapon as a boon of Lord Shiva. While granting this boon to Madhu, Shiva had said that if anyone is attacked by this trident then the latter would be reduced to ashes. Therefore, Lavnasur always carried it with him for protection. But unfortunately, at this time he had either tucked it under one of his arms, or had left it back home when he went out for hunting wild animals with the confidence that his reputation as a ruthless killer was so famous that no one would dare to challenge him, whether or not he has this trident with him.]

Verse nos. 18:

नातिपर्याप्तमालक्ष्य मत्कुक्षेरद्य भोजनम्।
दिष्ट्या त्वमसि मे धात्रा भीतेनेवोपपादितः॥ १५-१८

nātiparyāptamālakṣya matkukṣeradya bhojanam |
diṣṭyā tvamasi me dhātrā bhītenevopapāditah|| 15-18

15-18. When Lavnasur saw Shatrughan, he roared in anger at the latter: "Today my meal seemed insufficient. So the creator Brahma got so scared of my wrath that he has sent you with the purpose of replenishing my depleted stock of fresh meat.

{I would kill you and add your flesh to my plate to fill my stomach. I have not tasted human flesh for sometime, and my mouth has started watering by seeing you. Animals don't taste as nice as humans eaten raw.}" (18)

Verse nos. 18:

इति संतर्ज्य शत्रुघ्नम् राक्षसस्तज्जिघांसया।
प्रांशुमुत्पाटयामास मुस्तास्तम्बमिव द्रुमम्॥ १५-१९

iti saṁtarjya śatrughnam rākṣasastajjighāṁsayā |
prāṁśumutpāṭayāmāsa mustāstambamiva drumam|| 15-19

15-19. Saying this, Lavnasur uprooted a huge tree as easily as one would pick up a knot of grass, with the intention to kill Shatrughan with it.

Verse no. 20:

सौमित्रेर्निशितैर्बाणैरन्तरा शकलीकृतः।
गात्रम् पुष्परजः प्राप न शाखी नैरृतेरितः॥ १५-२०

saumitrerniśaitairbāṇairantarā śakalikṛtaḥ |
gātram puṣparajaḥ prāpa na śākhī nairṛteritaḥ|| 15-20

15-20. No sooner had Lavnasur thrown the huge tree at Shatrughan than the latter cut it into pieces with his sharp arrows, as a result of which the tree could not reach Shatrughan's body to cause any harm to him, but its flowers and their pollen got sprayed all over him (as if the gods were honouring Shatrughan by showering flowers on him and anointing him with their nectar for challenging Lavnasur, and to proclaim his victory over the demon in advance).

Verse no. 21:

विनाशात्तस्य वृक्षस्य रक्षस्तस्मै महोपलम्।
प्रजिघाय कृतान्तस्य मुष्टिम् पृथगिव स्थितम्॥ १५-२१

vināśāttasya vṛkṣasya rakṣastasmai mahopalam |
prajighāya kṛtāntasya muṣṭim pṛthagiva sthitam|| 15-21

15-21. When Lavnasur saw that the tree had been cut to pieces, he was taken aback at his failure to kill Shatrughan by it. So then he picked up a huge boulder and hurled it with great force at the latter as if the god of death himself had thrust his clenched fist at Shatrughan to bring him down.

Verse no. 22:

ऐन्द्रमस्त्रमुपादाय शत्रुघ्नेन स ताडितः।
सिकतात्वादपि परम् प्रपेदे परमाणुताम्॥ १५-२२

aindramastramupādāya śatrughnena sa tāḍitaḥ |
sikatātvādapi param prapede paramāṇutām|| 15-22

15-22. But Shatrughan used his weapon called 'Indra's Astra', which was like Indra's powerful Vajra (thunderbolt; a kind of hand-fired missile), to smash the boulder into smithereens midair, and reduce it to particles smaller than sand.

Verse no. 23:

तमुपाद्रवदुद्यम्य दक्षिणम् दोर्निशाचरः।
एकताल इवोत्पातपवनप्रेरितो गिरिः॥ १५-२३

tamupādravadudyamya dakṣiṇam dorniśācaraḥ |
ekatāla ivotpātapavanaprerito giriḥ|| 15-23

15-23. Lavnasur raised his right arm and lunged ferociously at Shatrughan. At that moment he appeared to be like a huge mountain that has been uprooted from its foundation by a gigantic whirlwind or a powerful tornado, and coming down rapidly to dash upon Shatrughan to crush him to death underneath.

Verse no. 24:

कार्ष्णेन पत्रिणा शत्रुः स भिन्नहृदयः पतन्।
अनिनाय भुवः कम्पम् जहाराश्रमवासिनाम्॥ १५-२४

kārṣṇena patriṇā śatruḥ sa bhinnahrdayaḥ patan |
anināya bhuvaḥ kampam jahārāśramavāsinām|| 15-24

15-24. Shatrughan shot a weapon called 'Narayan-Astra', i.e. a weapon that has been empowered by invoking Lord Narayan's strength upon it¹, which immediately slammed Lavnasur so violently that he immediately fell on the ground with such a mighty thud that while on the one hand the earth shook as if there was an earthquake, and on the other hand the shuddering and trembling of the inhabitants of hermitages of sages and ascetics disappeared once and for all².

[Note--¹The Narayan-Astra is the weapon of Lord Narayan, another name of Lord Vishnu. It is usually a mace. But any weapon can be converted into a Narayan-Astra by invoking Lord Vishnu's Mantras and empowering the weapon with it.

²What is meant here is that while the earth shook when the mighty body of Lavnasur fell on it with a violent thud, the sages and ascetics had at the same time lost their fear of him which had made them hitherto shiver and tremble.]

Verse no. 25:

वयसाम् पङ्क्तयः पेतुर्हतस्योपरि विद्विषः।
तत्प्रतिद्वन्द्विनो मूर्ध्नि दिव्याः कुसुमवृष्टयः॥ १५-२५

vayasām paṅktayah peturhatasyopari vidviṣaḥ |
tatpratidvandvino mūrdhni divyāḥ kusumavrṣṭayah|| 15-25

15-25. Rows of vultures and other birds of prey that feed on carcasses, such as crows, descended on the body of the dead demon Lavnasur and crowded around it (yanking out flesh and bones, and vying with each other to snatch any piece of meat, bone and entrails of the dead body which they could manage to pull out), while flowers were showered from the heaven on the head of the demon's adversary Shatrughan (to praise him and to celebrate the occasion of his victory over the demon).

Verse no. 26:

स हत्वा लवणम् वीरस्तदा मेने महौजसः।
भ्रातुः सोदर्यमात्मानमिन्द्रजिद्वधशोभिनः॥ १५-२६

sa hatvā lavaṇam vīrastadā mene mahaujasah |
bhrātuḥ sodaryamātmānamindrajidvadhśobhinah|| 15-26

15-26. Having slayed the mighty demon Lavnasur, Shatrughan felt that he has distinguished himself as being a true younger brother of the glorious Laxman who had earlier killed an equally mighty demon named Meghanad, the son of Ravana and the demon who had even vanquished Indra, the king of heaven (during the epic War of Lanka)¹.

[Note--¹The slaying of Meghanad by Laxman has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-16 that precede Doha no. 76.

Since Meghanad had vanquished Indra, he was often called Indrajeet, one who had conquered Indra.]

Verse no. 27:

तस्य संस्तूयमानस्य चरितार्थस्तपस्विभिः।

शुशुभे विक्रमोदग्रम् व्रीडयावनतम् शिरः॥ १५-२७

tasya saṁstūyamānasya caritārthaistapasvibhiḥ |
śuśubhe vikramodagram vṛīḍayāvanatam śiraḥ|| 15-27

15-27. When the aim of the sages and hermits of the place was successfully accomplished, they were very gratified and began to praise Shatrughan in lavish terms, but the latter was so modest by his inherent nature that he felt so shy at this honour that he politely bowed his head before them (as if silently asking them not to eulogise him so much because he has merely done his duty of protecting pious people who are being tormented by evil ones, and therefore he deserves no special praise).

Verse no. 28:

उपकूलम् च कालिन्द्याः पुरीम् पौरुषभूषणः।

निर्ममे निर्ममोऽर्थेषु मथुराम् मधुराकृतिः॥ १५-२८

upakūlam ca kālindyaḥ purīm pauruṣabhūṣaṇaḥ |
nirmame nirmamo'rtheṣu mathurām madhurākṛtiḥ|| 15-28

15-28. Then Shatrughan, who was renowned as a great, mighty and valiant warrior, who had no attachment to worldly things, and who had a very charming personality, established a city named Mathura on the banks of river Yamuna.

Verse no. 29:

या सौराज्यप्रकाशाभिर्बभौ पौरविभूतिभिः।

स्वर्गाभिष्यन्दवमनम् कृत्वेवोपनिवेशिता॥ १५-२९

yā saurājyaprakāśābhirbabhau pauravibhūtibhiḥ |
svargābhiṣyandavamanam kṛtvevopaniveśitā|| 15-29

15-29. With a noble and righteous king Shatrughan at the helm of affairs in this newly established city of Mathura, it became a magnet for nice people who came in droves from everywhere to make it their place of residence. Further, with good management and implementation of the rule of law based on the cardinal principles of Dharma (compassion, equity, righteousness, probity, propriety, goodness in thought and conduct, and an all round auspiciousness), the city thrived in all spheres of life, and soon it became prosperous and its citizens wealthy. It became a glittering city that vied with the glamour of heaven so much so that it appeared countless inhabitants of heaven had left it because it had become overcrowded and congested, and decided to migrate to Shatrughan's city of Mathura as it was equal to heaven in all aspects.

Verse no. 30:

**तत्र सौधगतः पश्यन्यमुनाम् चक्रवाकिनीम्।
हेमभक्तिमतीम् भूमेः प्रवेणीमिव पिप्रिये॥ १५-३०**

tatra saudhagataḥ paśyanyamunām cakravākinīm |
hemabhaktimatīm bhūmeḥ praveṇīmiva pipriye|| 15-30

15-30. Once Shatrughan went to the terrace of his tall palace and viewed river Yamuna from there. Its water was dark blue (as it so clean that it reflected the colour of the sky), and many pairs of Chakva-Chakvi birds (an aquatic bird called the ruddy duck) were chirping around merrily and frolicking on the current of its waters. The river appeared like a long braid of dark hairs that adorns the golden surface of earth.

[Note--The earth appeared golden from the high point of the palace because of the golden sunshine falling on it and illuminating it in all the directions. The clean water of river Yamuna reflected the colour of the sky, and hence it looked like a thick strand of dark hairs lying like a rope on the surface of the earth as its ornament.]

Verse no. 31:

**सखा दशरथस्यापि जनकस्य च मन्त्रकृत्।
संचस्कारोभयप्रीत्या मैथिलेयौ यथाविधि॥ १५-३१**

sakhā daśarathasyāpi janakasya ca mantrakṛt |
saṁcaskārobhayapṛityā maithileyau yathāvidhi|| 15-31

15-31. Meanwhile, the great sage Valmiki, who was an expert in Mantras and Vedic rituals, , personally supervised all the rituals associated with child-birth pertaining to the two newly born sons of Sita because he was a friend of both king Dashrath and king Janak (Sita's father-in-law and the father respectively). The sage ensured that all the rituals and worships are done properly and systematically in an orderly manner.

[Note--Obviously, sage Valmiki took the help of the female inmates of his own hermitage as well as of the surrounding hermitages. He had earlier assured Sita that she should treat him as her father, and that he would ensure that her children were

taken good and proper care when they are born. Refer: Canto 14, verse nos. 72, 74 and 75.]

Verse no. 32:

स तौ कुशलवोन्मृष्टगर्भक्लेदौ तदाख्यया।

कविः कुशलवावेव चकार किल नामतः॥ १५-३२

sa tau kuśalavonmr̥ṣṭagarbhakledau tadākhayā |
kaviḥ kuśalavāveva cakāra kila nāmataḥ|| 15-32

15-32. When Sita's elder son was born, he was cleaned of the slime on his body by the hairs from the tuft that naturally grew at the end of the tail of a cow that lived in sage Valmiki's hermitage. When the second son was born, tuft of kusha grass was used to clean him.

This is why the learned sage named the two brothers after the material used to clean them at the time of their birth. So therefore, the elder son was named 'Lava' because the hair at the end of a cow's tail is known by this name in Sanskrit, while his younger brother was named 'Kusha' because kusha grass was used to clean him.

Verse no. 33:

साङ्गम् च वेदमध्याप्य किञ्चिदुत्क्रान्तशैशवौ।

स्वकृतिम् गापयामास कविप्रथमपद्धतिम्॥ १५-३३

sāṅgam ca vedamadyāpya kiñcidutkrāntaśaiśavau |
svakṛtim gāpayāmāsa kaviprathamapaddhatim|| 15-33

15-33. When the two children grew up, sage Valmiki became their teacher. He taught them all the main Vedas as well as all their branches and their subsidiary knowledge (including of course the primary source of metaphysics and spiritualism as enshrined in the Upanishads). The sage also taught them the poem known as Ramayana which he had himself composed, and made them such an expert in it that the two boys could recite the verses out of their memory. {And the two boys thoroughly enjoyed learning this poem as it was a story rendered in the form of classical poetry, and it could be recited in a melodious way as compared to the dry text of other scriptures. Young boys usually are attracted to stories, and they thoroughly enjoy hearing and recounting them more than anything else.}

Verse no. 34:

रामस्य मधुरम् वृत्तम् गायन्तो मातुरग्रतः।

तद्वियोगव्यथाम् किञ्चिच्छिथिलीचक्रतुः सुतौ॥ १५-३४

rāmasya madhuram vṛttam gāyanto māturagrataḥ |
tadviyogavyathām kiñcicchithilīcakratuḥ sutau|| 15-34

15-34. The two young boys would enjoy reciting this poem (i.e. the Ramayana) taught to them by their teacher, sage Valmiki, before their mother Sita to entertain her. When Sita would see them singing the verses melodiously and saw happiness on their faces as they sang, her grief and distress arising out of her separation from Lord Ram would subside a lot.

{She would see her husband's reflection on the two sons of the Lord, and their sweet voices and childish demeanours entertained Sita so much that it virtually became a pleasant and favourite pastime for both the mother and her two children.}

Verse no. 35:

इतरेऽपि रघोर्वश्यास्त्रयस्त्रेताग्नितेजसः।

तद्योगात्पतिवत्नीषु पत्नीष्वसन्द्विसूनवः॥ १५-३५

itare'pi raghorvaṁśyāstrayastretāgnitejaśaḥ |
tadyogātpativatnīṣu patnīṣvāsandvisūnavaḥ || 15-35

15-35. Meanwhile, the three other brothers of Lord Ram, viz. Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan who were as glorious and radiant as the three sacred fires of Hinduism, i.e. the Grihapatya or Garhapatya Agni, the Ahavaniya Agni, and the Dakshina Agni, also established conjugal relationship with their respective wives and begot two sons each. {Their names are mentioned later on in this Canto.}

[Note—¹The 3 'sacred fires' in Hinduism are the following: (i) Grihapatya or Garhapatya Agni or the householder's fire that is used to cook food and keep members warm; (ii) the Ahavaniya Agni or the fire lit to invoke the gods and spiritual powers during fire sacrifices and religious rituals; and (iii) Dakshina Agni, literally the southern fire but in practice meaning the fire that is lit to stand witness at the end of a sacrifice when donations, alms and charities are made by the patron.

These fires were an obligatory part of ancient Vedic rituals. The 'fire' is a purifying element, and it is believed that it not only purifies the soul of the patron who worships it but also cleans the offerings made to the gods.

The three sacred fires listed above symbolically represent the mother, the father, and the creator respectively.]

Verse no. 36:

शत्रुघातिनि शत्रुघ्नः सुबाहौ च बहुश्रुते।

मथुराविदिशे सूनवोर्निदधे पूर्वजोत्सुकः॥ १५-३६

śatrughātini śatrughnaḥ subāhau ca bahuśrute |
mathurāvidiśe sūnvornidadhe pūrvajotsukaḥ|| 15-36

15-36. After completing his mission, Shatrughan was very eager to go back and meet his other three brothers. So therefore, he assigned his two sons, Subahu (who was strong in arms, hence the name) and Bahusrut (who was well-versed in different branches of knowledge, hence his name), the duty of ruling the two kingdoms of Mathura and Vidisha respectively by anointing them as the king of these two places.

Verse no. 37:

भूयस्तपोव्ययो मा भूद्वाल्मीकेरिति सोऽत्यगात्।
मैथिलीतनयोद्गीतनिःस्पन्दमृगमाश्रमम्॥ १५-३७

bhūyastapovyayo mā bhūdvālmīkeriti so'tyagāt |
maithilītanayodgītaniḥspandamṛgamāśramam|| 15-37

15-37. On his way back to Ayodhya, Shatrughan skipped the hermitage of sage Valmiki where the deer and other tamed animals used to collect cheerfully to hear the two brothers, Lava and Kusha, melodiously recite the verses of the story of the Ramayana that was taught to them by the sage. Shatrughan avoided visiting the sage because he did not wish to disturb the peaceful environment of his hermitage in the first place, and secondly, he did not want that the sage should be put to any kind of inconvenience on his account by invoking mystical powers to make arrangements for extending hospitality to him as well as the large retinue of attendants and soldiers that accompanied him.

[Note--During his outbound journey to Madhuvan, Shatrughan had experienced how sage Valmiki, who himself lived a frugal life of a hermit, had invoked his mystical powers to arrange for things needed to host a large contingent of troops and attendants who accompanied Shatrughan. He therefore did not want to put the sage to the same inconvenience because every time a sage would employ his spiritual powers for the purpose of entertaining guests, so much of his spiritual merit would be deducted from the overall balance of his accumulated spiritual wealth, much like a person's bank balance in the modern world where every withdrawal reduces the credit balance standing against his name in his account to the extent of the withdrawal.

It is important to note here that Shatrughan had not tried to avoid meeting Sita by skipping a visit to sage Valmiki's hermitage, but to avoid putting the sage to any kind of inconvenience on his account.]

Verse no. 38:

वशी विवेश चायोध्याम् रथ्यसंस्कारशोभिनीम्।
लवणस्य वधात्पौरैरीक्षितोऽत्यन्तगौरवम्॥ १५-३८

vaśī viveśa cāyodhyām rathyasamskāraśobhinīm |
lavaṇasya vadhātpaurairīkṣito'tyantagauravam|| 15-38

15-38. Shatrughan, who practiced self-control, arrived in Ayodhya where the streets had been colourfully decorated by the citizens to warmly welcome him, as they wished to show their admiration for him as well as their happiness at the news that he was returning home as a victorious warrior who had vanquished the mighty demon Lavnasur.

Verse no. 39:

स ददर्श सभामध्ये सभासद्भिरुपस्थितम्।

रामम् सीतापरित्यागादसामान्यपतिम् भुवः॥ १५-३९

sa dadarśa sabhāmadhye sabhāsadbhirupasthitam |
rāmam sītāparityāgādasāmānyapatim bhuvaḥ|| 15-39

15-39. When Shatrughan reached the royal court, he saw that Lord Ram was seated on the throne surrounded by many courtiers and ministers who were attending him. After abandoning his wife Sita, Lord Ram had the freedom to enjoy all the pleasures and comforts that are inherent to kingship all by himself, with nobody else to share them with him. Besides, the Lord could spend a lot more time than conventionally needed to attend court and deal with the affairs of the vast kingdom.

{To put in simple terms, if Sita had been with him, Lord Ram would have had to reserve some of his time to be spent with her, and share all the royal privileges with her. But since she was not there and he was all alone, he had the opportunity to enjoy all these privileges himself, without the necessity or obligation or courtesy or formality of sharing them with his wife. Besides, without his wife by his side, he if he so wished he could devote all his time to enjoy such comforts and pleasures that were at his disposal without any hindrance or qualms or anyone to question his indulgences. And further, now he could spend more of his time attending the royal court and dealing with the affairs of the kingdom as he had no one to attend to in his private palace where he would go only to take rest for the day and attend to his daily personal chores and ablutions.}

Verse no. 40:

तमभ्यनन्दत्प्रणतम् लवणान्तकमग्रजः।

कालनेमिवधात्प्रीतस्तुराषाडिव शार्ङ्गिणम्॥ १५-४०

tamabhyanandatpraṇatam lavaṇāntakamagrajaḥ |
kālanemivadhātpṛītasturāṣāḍiva śārṅgiṇam|| 15-40

15-40. Just like Indra, the king of heaven, had congratulated his younger brother Lord Vishnu when the latter had eliminated the demon Kalnemi¹, likewise Lord Ram rose to welcome and congratulate his younger brother Shatrughan for killing the demon Lavnasur when Shatrughan bowed to pay his respects to his elder brother, Lord Ram.

[Note--¹ Kalnemi was a powerful general in the army of Tarkasur. He was ultimately slayed by Lord Vishnu. The legends associated with him are as follows:

Lord Vishnu killed Kalnemi during the legendary God-Demon war, especially during the churning of the celestial ocean in search for Amrit, the elixir of eternal life. Kalnemi had a lion as his mount and was a powerful general in the army of the demons Tarkasur and Maya, often referred collectively as Tarakamaya. During Lord Vishnu's battle with these demons, Kalnemi attacked his foe Lord Vishnu and swallowed him whole along with his mount Garud, the Eagle. Vishnu quickly recovered and used his Chakra to cut through the demon's abdomen. Then, Lord Vishnu killed him by using the same weapon known as Sudarshan Chakra by severing the demon's head by hit. This Chakra was shaped like a circular disc with sharp razor-

like serrated edge. When Kalnemi died, sage Shukracharya, the guru of the demon race, brought him back to life.

In another version of this story, Kalnemi had attacked Garud, Lord Vishnu's mount, with a trident, but the Lord caught hold of it before it could strike Garud, and then Vishnu used the same trident to kill Kalnemi and his mount, a lion.

This story of Kalnemi being slayed by Lord Vishnu has been narrated in (a) Skanda Puran, Kumarika Khanda, Maheshwar Kand or section, Chapters 19-32; (b) Padma Puran, Srishti Kand or section, Chapter 65; and (b) briefly in Srimad Bhagwad, 8-10-56 which refers to the God-Demon war where Lord Vishnu kills Kalnemi.

In his next birth, Kalnemi was re-born as Kansha, the demon-like ruler of Mathura during the era of Lord Krishna who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Since Kalnemi harboured an old grudge against Lord Vishnu, he tried his best to kill Lord Krishna, but failed and was ultimately killed by the Lord. The rebirth of Kalnemi as Kansha during Lord Krishna's era has been mentioned in Srimad Bhagwat, 10-1-68.

It must, however, be noted here that there are variations in numbering of chapters in ancient texts depending upon their editions.

Kalnemi was virtually invincible because of the powers he had acquired by doing severe penances. So only Lord Vishnu was powerful enough to eliminate him. His story is mentioned in Garga Sanhita, Chapter 6, verse no. 1-8.

In two versions of the Ramayana, i.e. Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, and Ram Charit Manas of poet Goswami Tulsidas, it is narrated that Hanuman slayed Kalnemi during the War of Lank when the latter, at the behest of the demon king Ravana, tried to obstruct Hanuman's path when he was going to bring the herb needed to revive an injured Laxman in the battle-field of Lanka. Refer: (a) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto nos. 6-7; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 56-to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58.]

Verse no. 41:

**स पृष्टः सर्वतो वार्तमाख्यद्राज्ञे न संततिम्।
प्रत्यर्पयिष्यतः काले कवेराद्यस्य शासनात्॥ १५-४१**

sa prṣṭaḥ sarvato vārtamākhyadrājñe na saṁtatim |
pratyarpayiṣyataḥ kāle kaverādyasya śāsanāt|| 15-41

15-41. When Lord Ram enquired from Shatrughan about his journey and the success of his primary mission, the latter informed the Lord about everything but made no mention of the birth of his two sons at sage Valmiki's hermitage, because the sage had himself told him not to divulge this information to the Lord, saying that he would himself meet Lord Ram and hand over the custody of his two sons to him at an appropriate time.

Verse no. 42:

अथ जानपदो विप्रः शिशुमप्राप्तयौवनम्।

अवतार्याङ्कशय्यास्थम् द्वारि चक्रन्द भूपतेः॥ १५-४२

atha jānapado vipraḥ śiśumaprāptayauvanam |
avatāryāṅkaśayyāsthām dvāri cakranda bhūpateḥ|| 15-42

15-42. After some days had passed peacefully, one day a Brahmin of the kingdom (of Ayodhya) came to the gate of the royal palace with his dead son in his arms. He put the dead body on the doorway of the king's (i.e. Lord Ram's) palace and wailed loudly.

Verse no. 43:

शोचनीयासि वसुधे या त्वम् दशरथाच्च्युता।

रामहस्तमनुप्राप्य कष्टात्कष्टतरम् गता॥ १५-४३

śocanīyāsi vasudhe yā tvam daśarathāccyutā |
rāmahastamanuprāpya kaṣṭātkāṣṭataram gatā|| 15-43

15-43. The Brahmin lamented: "Oh Mother Earth (vasudhe)! After you have lost the most honourable king Dashrath (owing to his death) as your care-taker and patron and came in the custody of his son Lord Ram thereafter, you have been surrounded by misfortunes and miseries, and have come to a deplorable condition (which was unimaginable during king Dashrath's time)."

Verse no. 44:

श्रुत्वा तस्य शुचो हेतुम् गोप्ता जिह्वाय राघवः।

न ह्यकालभवो मृत्युरिक्ष्वाकुपदमस्पृशत्॥ १५-४४

śrutvā tasya śuco hetum goptā jihvāya rāghavaḥ |
na hyakālabhavo mṛtyurikṣvākupadamaspṛśat|| 15-44

15-44. When Lord Ram, who was famous as a king who took good care of his subjects and always ensured their welfare, heard the lamentations of the Brahmin, he was dismayed and shocked, because during the reign of kings of the Ikshwaku dynasty there had never been an untimely death of anybody. No young person died before his or her elders, and no father had to suffer bereavement due to the death of his son or daughter.

Verse no. 45:

स मुहूर्तम् क्षमस्वेति दिवजमाशवास्य दुःखितम्।

यानम् सस्मार कौबेरम् वैवस्वतजिगीषया॥ १५-४५

sa muhūrtam kṣamasveti dvijamāśvāsyā duḥkhitam |
yānam sasmāra kauberam vaivasvatajigīṣayā|| 15-45

15-45. Lord Ram called the grieving Brahmin father and requested him to excuse the Lord for this minor lapse. The Lord asked him to wait for some time while he would make arrangements to remove the cause of his grief, i.e. make arrangements to revive his son back to life.

Giving the Brahmin this assurance, Lord Ram summoned the Pushpak plane with an intention of attacking and vanquishing the god of death, i.e. Yama (the son of Vaivaswat; "vaivasvata"), and forcing the latter to spare the Brahmin's son.

Verse no. 46:

आत्तशस्त्रस्तदध्यास्य प्रस्थितः स रघूद्वहः।
उच्चचार पुरस्तस्य गूढरूपा सरस्वती॥ १५-४६

ātaśastrastadadhyāsyā prasthitaḥ sa raghūdvaḥ |
uccacāra purastasya gūḍharūpā sarasvatī|| 15-46

15-46. When Lord Ram armed himself with his weapons and mounted the Pushpak plane to prepare to go and vanquish Yama, an invisible deity spoke to him from the sky in a deep, resounding voice (gūḍharūpā). It was as if goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of knowledge and wisdom, herself was giving some wise advice (sarasvatī) to the Lord who was an honourable scion of the ancient king Raghu's dynasty (raghūdvaḥ).

Verse no. 47:

राजन् प्रजासु ते कश्चिदपचारः प्रवर्तते।
तमन्विष्य प्रशमयेर्भविष्यसि ततः कृती॥ १५-४७

rājan prajāsu te kaścidapacāraḥ pravartate |
tamanviṣya praśamayerbhaviṣyasi tataḥ kṛtī|| 15-47

15-47. The voice of the invisible deity in the sky (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the deity who is a guardian of knowledge, as well as the upholder of the rule of law and order in this world, and who is responsible for ensuring that everyone in creation adheres to the universal set of protocols for righteous and honourable living that has been designed to maintain balance and goodness in this creation) said: "Oh Lord Ram, the noble king of the realm! There is someone amongst your subjects who is violating the rule of conduct set for different segments of society to maintain law and order in this creation. This break from protocol creates a bad precedent, and it cannot be neglected for its consequences would have far-reaching effects, and it would upset the balance and harmony needed for smooth and orderly working of the different segments of the society. Otherwise, there would be anarchy and a free-for-all situation that would be a problem for you as well, especially undermining your reputation as an upholder of Dharma and principles of right conduct in all spheres of life (i.e. as a guardian of the

rule of law, and strict adherence to the principles of righteousness, propriety and right path).

So therefore, you must go and find out who is violating such rules and doing things or acting in a way that is contrary to set norms of behaviour for members of the different sections of the society as ordained by ancient tradition (because such deeds, if allowed to go unpunished, would, in the long run, cause disarray and anarchy amongst your subjects, and undermine your authority and good name as a law-keeper). It is only then that your aim of restoring the life of the Brahmin's son would be fulfilled, and you would gain credit for doing your duty as a king."

{This is because doing wrong and breaking or violating rules of Dharma and duties assigned to various segments of the society is tantamount to committing a sin and misdemeanour, and when sins and misconduct are committed by the subjects of a king then not only calamities and unnatural events of ominous nature start happening in the kingdom, but the king himself is held responsible and guilty of allowing such things to happen.}

Verse no. 48:

इत्याप्तवचनाद्रामो विनेष्यन्वर्णविक्रियाम्।

दिशः पपात पत्रेण वेगनिष्कम्पहेतुना॥ १५-४८

ityāptavacanādrāmo vineṣyanvarṇavikriyām |
diśaḥ papāta patreṇa veganiṣkampahetunā|| 15-48

15-48. Having been thus alerted by the voice from the sky, Lord Ram changed course. While still riding the Pushpak plane-- which had flags fluttering from it, which had tremendous speed, and which moved so smoothly that there were no shaking or shuddering, making its passengers feel very comfortable-- he decided to make an aerial survey of his realm to find out where any of the principles of Dharma related to the four Ashrams (segments of the society) were being violated without his knowledge, and which has led to the death of the Brahmin's son as well as smearing his own reputation with the taint of being negligent.

Verse no. 49:

अथ धूमाभितामाक्षम् वृक्षशाखावलम्बिनम्।

ददर्श कंचिदैक्ष्वाकस्तपस्यन्तमधोमुखम्॥ १५-४९

atha dhūmābhitāmrākṣam vṛkṣaśākhāvalambinam |
dadarśa kaṁcidaikṣvākastapasyantamadhomukham|| 15-49

15-49. While surveying his kingdom to find out any violation of the rules of the four Ashrams by anyone, at one place he saw that a man, attired as an ascetic, was dangling upside down from the branch of a tree with a fire burning on the ground below him. He was sucking the smoke of the fire which had made his eyes red and swollen. He appeared to be doing some kind of penance.

Verse no. 50:

पृष्टनामान्वयो राज्ञा स किलाचष्ट धूमपः।
आत्मानम् शम्बुकम् नाम शूद्रम् सुरपदार्थिनम्॥ १५-५०

prṣṭanāmānvayo rājñā sa kilācaṣṭa dhūmapaḥ |
ātmānam śambukam nāma śūdram surapadārthinam|| 15-50

15-50. This sight aroused curiosity in Lord Ram. So the Lord asked that man: "Who are you, what is your name, and what is the race in which you are born."

The ascetic replied: "I am doing penance with the aim of attaining heaven, the abode of gods. My name is Shambuk, and I am born in the Shudra race (which is the fourth and lowest class in the four divisions of the society)."

Verse no. 51:

तपस्यनधिकारित्वात्प्रजानाम् तमघावहम्।
शीर्षच्छेदयम् परिच्छिद्य नियन्ता शस्त्रमाददे॥ १५-५१

tapasyanadhikāritvātprajānām tamaghāvaham |
śīrṣacchedyam paricchidya niyantā śastramādade|| 15-51

15-51. When Lord Ram heard what the man had said, he was taken aback. {The Lord was not against anyone doing penance or aiming to go to heaven, but it should be done in a proper way and in a manner as sanctioned in the scriptures. As a 'shudra', the man was not authorised to do penance as a means to attain heaven (because for such men doing selfless service to others, leading a simple and orderly life, and helping others carry on with their assigned duties has been ordained as the easiest and the most convenient way to attain salvation and emancipation of their souls, which translates into attaining heaven).

Since the man was violating the set norms pertaining to the segment of the society to which he belonged (i.e. Shudra), the Lord decided to punish him, as this single man's unauthorised actions were having a negative impact on the overall balance in the society of his kingdom, and since he was a king it was his duty to prevent such things from happening and be allowed to perpetuate. {The Lord thought for a while and came to the conclusion that if he neglects this single instance of violation of the rules, then others too would follow suit, and gradually all norms of conduct would be gone to the wind, and a culture of free-for-all would come to roost and get entrenched in his kingdom. So therefore, this wayward behaviour must be nipped in the bud.}

Deciding that it was prudent and wise to kill this man for the wider good of the subjects of his kingdom, Lord Ram picked up his weapon with this purpose in mind.

Verse no. 52:

स तद्वक्त्रम् हिमक्लिष्टकिञ्जल्कमिव पङ्कजम्।
ज्योतिष्कणाहतश्मश्रु कण्ठनालादपातयत्॥ १५-५२

sa tadvaktram himakliṣṭakiñjalkamiva pañkajam |
jyotiṣkaṇāhataśmaśru kañṭhanālādapātayat|| 15-52

15-52. With one swift stroke, the Lord cut-off his head from his trunk just like a lotus flower that can be swiftly cut-off from its stalk. The man's beards had been scorched by the flames of the fire, and his trunk was blackened by the heat of the fire burning beneath. When the severed head fell down on the ground by the side of the pile of wood and the trunk collapsed near it and got covered by ash and dirt, it reminded one of a lotus that has been frostbitten and dislodged from its stalk, while the broken stalk itself looked dirty as it was smudged over by the dirt of the surrounding ground when it fell by the side of the lotus.

Verse no. 53:

कृतदण्डः स्वयम् राजा लेभे शूद्रः सताम् गतिम्।
तपसा दुश्चरेणापि न स्वमार्गविलङ्घिना॥ १५-५३

kṛtadaṇḍaḥ svayam rājā lebhe śūdraḥ satām gatim |
tapasā duścarenāpi na svamārgavilāṅghinā|| 15-53

15-53. When the Shudra man got his due punishment at the hands of a righteous king, Lord Ram, he attained deliverance for his soul which he would not have otherwise got as he was violating or transgressing the sanctioned codes of conduct for the particular section of the society to which he belonged. {Refer verse no. 51 herein above.}

[Note--To wit, if a person accepts punishment for any mistake he has done, then he is deemed to have freed himself from the consequences of his mistake. It is only when a person's sins go unpunished that he or she has to suffer. After all, this is the very purpose of doing penance, observing austerities, making charities, and undertaking pilgrimage and other religious practices--so that the accumulated negative effects of any wrong done by the person in his life, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or inadvertently, that may otherwise block the liberation and deliverance of the concerned person's soul from the cycle of transmigration, is neutralised and taken care of, thereby paving the way for his emancipation and salvation.]

Verse no. 54:

रघुनाथोऽप्यगस्त्येन मार्गसंदर्शितात्मना।
महौजसा संयुयुजे शरत्काल इवेन्दुना॥ १५-५४

raghunātho'pyagastyena mārgasaṁdarsītātmanā |
mahaujasā saṁyuyuje śaratkāla ivendunā|| 15-54

15-54. On his way back to Ayodhya, Lord Ram met the most exalted sage Agastya who was renowned for his penances and austerities. This meeting reminded one of the part of the year when the autumn season and the full moon shining brilliantly in the sky appear together¹.

[Note—¹The autumn season comes once in a year, and it marks the season when farmers harvest their crops. Although the full moon appears every month of the year, in all the seasons, but its appearance during autumn season not only happens once in a year but it shines ever so brilliantly during this month because the sky is clear after the rainy season. Likewise, though Lord Ram had met sage Agastya twice earlier also, once while on his way to the forest*1, and then on his way back from Lanka to Ayodhya*2, it was a coincidence that Lord Ram would meet sage Agastya on the way back to Ayodhya for the third time, especially after becoming the King-Emperor of the empire. On the previous two occasions the Lord was attired as a hermit, but now he shone in royal splendour. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *1Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 12; and *2 Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 120.}

In this metaphor, Lord Ram is like the autumn season, and sage Agastya is the moon of autumn. Since autumn is the harvesting season when crop is harvested for consumption by people that in turn sustains life on earth, so was the rule of Lord Ram who took care of his subjects and ensured their all-round well-being, welfare, good and sustenance. Sage Agastya was like the moon of autumn because he was an illustrious and brilliant sage of high spiritual achievement, enlightenment, depth of knowledge accompanied by the virtue of self-realisation and self-control. In an assembly of sages and ascetics, sage Agastya stood out prominently like the shining full moon of autumn does in the sky amidst the numerous stars and planets that dot the firmament and look dim in the presence of the glorious moon.

The full moon of autumn is regarded as a symbol of beauty, tranquillity and spiritual connectivity with the divine forces of Nature that act as an anchor for creation. It is also called the 'harvest moon' because during this season the farmers harvest their crop before the harsh days of winter set in. The full moon's bright light help the farmers to work during the night after the sun sets. Harvesting of crop is crucial for sustaining life, because without food no life can survive on earth. Merely sowing seed and good rainfall during the rainy season are of no use if the crop is not harvested for consumption.

The moon of the autumn season has a clear moonlight that provides illumination to the farmers so that they can work late into the night. The moonlight is best in the year during the autumn season: it is bright, clear and steady in a clear sky free from clouds and dust, and this moon is like the heaven's own night-lamp for inhabitants of earth.

During this period, the moon rises at almost the same time for several nights, around sunset. From spiritual point of view it symbolises steadiness of spiritual progress and achievement, uniformity in the virtues of wisdom, enlightenment, self-control and self-realisation, as well as righteousness of thought, constancy of behaviour and equanimity of attitude towards all matters pertaining to life, virtues shared by sage Agastya.

And Lord Ram looking after the welfare of his subjects and sustaining them through his magnanimous attitude, equanimity and rule of law symbolises the autumn season because during this season crop is harvested for providing food all the people of the land, without discrimination.

There is another interpretation of this metaphor of the moon and autumn as applied to sage Agastya and Lord Ram. 'Light' represents knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, awareness and realisation, while 'darkness' stands for all things opposite, i.e. ignorance, stupidity, dullness, lack of knowledge, awareness and wisdom etc. So therefore, just like the moon's light helps the farmer to continue with

his duties and responsibilities regarding his harvest yield during the autumn season, which would not have been possible in the darkness of the night sans moonlight, so was the case with Lord Ram as he would consult sage Agastya whenever they met to discuss various issues, and the sage's wise advice would then show Lord Ram the right and correct path he should choose from the many options before him. During this particular meeting referred to in the present verse, the Lord faced a piquant situation: a man had brought a dead child before him and accused him of violating laws of good rule expected from a king because such calamities as untimely death and other sufferings that the subject of a kingdom have to endure happen only in the reign of a sinful ruler. This view was endorsed by the deity's voice in the sky. Understandably, Lord Ram was confused and very anxious to set things right as he was sure he had not personally done anything that would be sinful or unrighteous.

In this backdrop, it is quite sure that the two, Agastya and Lord Ram, discussed the present issue about the voice that Lord Ram heard from the sky and its deep meaning, and the Lord most surely sought sage Agastya's advice on the matter and what he should do now as a follow-up action. The wise and erudite sage must have given the Lord council on this matter, and at the same time calm the Lord's anxiety about any ill effects of any inadvertent error that he may have made unwittingly during the routine course of managing the state of affairs of a huge kingdom, trying to do his best, but as a human may have made some slips here and there.

This is why this metaphor fits right in: the 'light' of sage's wisdom and erudition guided Lord Ram at a time when he was ignorant of any kind of wrongdoing under his command, and was therefore perplexed as what to and what not to do next. The sage's advice showed him the right path by lighting it in a situation when everything seemed 'dark' and confused for the Lord.]

Verse no. 55:

**कुम्भयोनिरलंकारम् तस्मै दिव्यपरिग्रहम्।
ददौ दत्तम् समुद्रेण पीतेनेवात्मनिष्क्रयम्॥ १५-५५**

kumbhayoniralamkāram tasmai divyaparigraham |
dadau dattam samudreṇa pītenevātmaniṣkṛayam|| 15-55

15-55. Sage Agastya gave Lord Ram certain ornaments (a brilliantly shining bracelet) as a gift that the ocean had earlier given to him to please the sage when the latter had threatened to drink the entire water of the ocean to dry it up¹.

[Note--¹According to legend, sage Agastya had dried up the ocean by drinking it in three gulps. He had used the joint palms of his hands to scoop up the water to gulp it down.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva, Cantos 103-105; and (iv) Anand Ramayan, Vilaas Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-24. This feat of sage Agastya is cited by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

There are three versions of how Agastya had drunk the ocean. Let us read them in brief now.

(a) Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named ‘Kaaleya’ managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vashistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

(b) This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the *Anand Ramayan* (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin’s urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

According to this legend, the ocean had washed away the items of worship that sage Agastya had arranged for his routine religious rituals. Agastya became peeved and drank up the ocean. When the gods prayed to him to forgive the ocean, the kind sage obliged and refilled it in the form of his urine. That is the reason why the ocean is bitter and salty like urine.

(c) The third version is this: Sage Agastya once took pity on a bird whose eggs were washed away by the ocean. The grieving bird was trying to dry the water of the ocean by picking drops of it in its beak. Then the sage decided to punish the ocean by drinking it up.

In all these versions, one thing is found common, and it is that the sage had invoked the divine powers of Lord Ram to accomplish this unique feat. He had pronounced the Mantra (spiritual formula to invoke the cosmic powers of a chosen deity) of Lord Ram, which is “Raamaaye Raamchandraaye Raambhadraaye’.]

Verse no. 56:

स दधन्मैथिलीकण्ठनिर्व्यापारेण बाहुना।

पश्चान्निववृते रामः प्राक्परासुर्द्विजात्मजः॥ १५-५६

sa dadhanmaithilikanṭhanirvyāpāreṇa bāhunā |
paścānnivavṛte rāmaḥ prākparāsurdvijātmajaḥ || 15-56

15-56. Lord Ram wore that ornament on his forearm which had been deprived of the privilege of being wrapped around the neck of Sita because she was no longer with the Lord.

{To wit, Lord Ram would put his arms lovingly around the neck of Sita during the couple's private moments. Now that Sita was no more with him, his arms felt lonely and sad. So to please his arms which were feeling hurt and sad, Lord Ram put the beautiful ornaments given to him by the sage around his forearms in a symbolic gesture to please them. If the ornament was one, the Lord put it around one arm, and if there were two pieces, he put one in each of his two arms.}

Meanwhile, even before the Lord returned to Ayodhya, the dead son of the complaint Brahmin man was revived back to life.

Verse no. 57:

तस्य पूर्वोदिताम् निन्दाम् दिवजः पुत्रसमागतः।

स्तुत्वा निवर्तयामास त्रातुर्वैवस्वतादपि॥ १५-५७

tasya pūrvoditām nindām dvijaḥ putrasamāgataḥ |
stutvā nivartayāmāsa trāturvaivasvatādapi|| 15-57

15-57. When his son was revived back to life, the Brahmin, who had a while ago heaped ignominy on Lord Ram and derided him for neglecting the welfare of his subjects, now became so pleased that he lavishly praised the Lord in glorious terms. The Brahmin literally washed away his sin of accusing the righteous king of wrongdoing by lauding the same king and singing laurels in his praise--because Lord Ram had saved his son from the shackles of Yama, the god of death.

[Note--One minute ago, the Brahmin accused Lord Ram as being the most sinful king ever born in Ayodhya simply because his son had died (refer: verse nos. 42-44 herein above), and a little while later he was all praise for the Lord--because his son was saved from death, irrespective of the fact that another man had to die for him (i.e. the Shudra, refer: verse no. 52)! Such is the selfish way of this world.]

Verse no. 58:

तमध्वराय मुक्ताश्वम् रक्षःकपिनरेश्वराः।

मेघाः सस्यमिवाम्भोभिरभ्यवर्षन्नुपायनैः॥ १५-५८

tamadhvarāya muktāśvam rakṣaḥkapinareśvarāḥ |
meghāḥ sasyamivāmbhobhirabhyavarṣannupāyanaiḥ|| 15-58

15-58. After sometime, Lord Ram organised a horse sacrifice when he set a horse free to roam anywhere it wished.

At that time, his two friends, Sugriv, the king of Kishkindha, and Vibhishan, the king of Lanka, arrived with immense amount of costly gifts for the Lord and heaped them all around them just like clouds pour abundance of rain to sustain standing crops in the field.

[Note--During a 'horse sacrifice', a horse is set free, and a large army follows it from behind. Any ruler who stops the horse from proceeding further had to fight the army. If he lost then he had to pay a heavy penalty as tribute to the king to whom the horse belonged, and also accept his dominance over his kingdom so much so that he becomes obliged to pay an annual tribute the conquering king. On the other hand, if he wins, then the horse sacrifice is deemed to have failed, which meant a calamity for the horse-owning king who would now have to surrender his crown to the other king who held the horse and won the battle.

In case the horse got killed during the conflict or for any other reason, then the 'horse sacrifice' was deemed to be defiled. This would infuriate the emperor who would then lead a personal campaign at the head of a huge army to his enemy's lands, and use the full brutal force and might of his power to lay waste the opponent king's realms.

In case the horse died due to some other reason than a battle with an opposing king, then the entire detachment of the army, with its soldiers and commanders as well as those responsible for the protection of the horse, were put to the sword.

Death of a sacrificial horse before the end a successful campaign indicated an evil omen for the emperor, so he would do large-scale penances and perform all sorts of charities and other religious deeds, along with engaging priests to perform elaborate rituals, in order to deflect the negative influences of malignant stars. Till the time of the next successful completion of another horse sacrifice, this emperor would remain under constant mental distress and fear of a disaster befalling him and his empire, especially the prospect of defeat in case of an attack by another powerful ruler.

Usually, only great emperors and mighty kings had the wherewithal and the competence to successfully carry out a horse sacrifice. In ancient times, it was a means for a great king-emperor to exert and exercise his authority over his vast and extended realm, and to keep other smaller kings and principalities reined-in who otherwise would have declared their independence from the sovereign, thinking that the latter has become weak.

Another reason why other kings would submit without a fight is that a cloak of religiosity was used to hide the actual intention, because it was believed that organising a horse sacrifice, called the Aswamedh Yagya, is a religiously sanctified ritual for great king, and that the horse is consecrated by elaborate rituals, and therefore to obstruct its path would be a sacrilegious and contemptuous act, which would invite punishment by the gods in some way or the other.

A huge wealth was needed to support this mammoth exercise. So friends of kings who performed a horse sacrifice would come voluntarily to donate wealth and contribute their help by way of lending troops to the effort. In this case, Sugriv and Vibhishan came to help Lord Ram successfully complete the ritual.

Verse no. 59:

दिग्भ्यो निमन्त्रिताश्चैनमभिजग्मुर्महर्षयः।

न भौमान्येव धिष्ण्यानि हित्वा ज्योतिर्मयान्यपि॥ १५-५९

digbhyo nimantritāścainamabhijagmurmaharṣayaḥ |
na bhaumānyeva dhiṣṇyāni hitvā jyotirmayānyapi|| 15-59

15-59. During the rituals of the horse sacrifice, Lord Ram had invited all the great sages and saints of the time from all the corners of the world. They had come not only from the four corners of the earth but also from the heaven.

Verse no. 60:

उपशल्यनिविष्टैस्तैश्चतुर्द्वारमुखी बभौ।

अयोध्या सृष्टलोकेव सद्यः पैतामही तनुः॥ १५-६०

upaśalyaniviṣṭaistaiścaturdvāramukhī babhau |
ayodhyā sṛṣṭalokeva sadyaḥ paitāmahī tanuḥ|| 15-60

15-60. The arriving guest sages and seers began to put up camp in the villages on the outskirts of the glorious city of Ayodhya. When they finally entered the city through its four massive gates on its four corners while chanting Vedic hymns, then at the time the city of Ayodhya looked like a living embodiment of the creator Brahma who too had four mouths and who had pronounced the four Vedas through his four mouths.

[Note--Ayodhya had four great gates on four sides just like the four mouths of Brahma facing the four directions. Brahma had pronounced the four Vedas, Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva, by these four mouths of his, and the entry of great sages through the four gates of Ayodhya while chanting hymns of the Vedas reminded one of that ancient event.]

Verse no. 61:

श्लाघ्यस्त्यागोऽपि वैदेह्याः पत्युः प्राग्वंशवासिनः।

अनन्यजानेः सैवासीद्यस्माज्जाया हिरण्मयी॥ १५-६१

ślāghyastyāgo'pi vaidehyāḥ patyuḥ prāgvaṁśavāsināḥ |
ananyajāneḥ saivāśīdyasmājjāyā hiraṇmayī|| 15-61

15-61. After abandoning Sita, there was one thing for which Lord Ram was universally praised, and it was that he did not marry again¹. But for a married king, it was necessary to have his consort by his side to conduct the rituals associated with the horse sacrifice. So therefore, Lord Ram had got a life-size statue of Sita made of gold and kept it on his left where ordinarily Sita would have sat, to symbolically represent her during the rituals.

[Note—¹Lord Ram was extremely conscientious about his conduct and was very careful about being on the right side of Dharma, so as to ensure that not a single

subject of his kingdom or elsewhere could raise a finger against him and his upright nature. So when he had heard some evil gossip doing the rounds amongst his own subjects concerning his wife Sita, he was astonished, dismayed and dumbfounded. He could have easily summoned that mischief monger and summarily punished him for his unsubstantiated, false and audacious accusations, but since he loved his subjects like a father loves his children, and at the same time also realised that he could not suppress popular voice or view by repressive means by punishing an individual as it would do more harm than good to his own reputation, the Lord decided to remove the very cause of this cancerous hush-hush talk by sending Sita away, or literally discarding her even though he was absolutely sure she was pure, loyal, chaste and immaculate as was proved in the battle-field of Lanka itself when the Lord had asked her to prove her purity by undergoing the ‘fire-test’. {Refer: (a) Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chanda line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 109; (b) Valmiki Ramayan, Yuddha Kand, Chapter 116; and (c) Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Lanka Kand, Canto nos. 12-13.}

But the irony is that no one from Ayodhya was a witness to this fire-test as it was done in far-away Lanka. Obviously this situation paved the way for gossip and tongue-in-cheek remarks, and the subjects could be excused for such wild accusations because, honestly, they were completely ignorant of the reality that Sita had already proved her purity by the fire-test.

When Lord Ram deeply pondered over this aspect of the matter, he realised his own mistake of not getting the fire-test done in Ayodhya before his subjects. Hence, since it was his own error of judgement, he thought it prudent not to punish the gossipier, and instead banish Sita to a safe place under the guardianship of the senior sage Valmiki.

In this context, the reader should refer to Canto 14, verse no. 61 where we read that Sita herself has raised the question of the propriety of Lord Ram’s action of leaving her in spite of her having proved the purity of herself and the immaculacy of her character by undergoing the rigorous fire-test.

Refer also to Canto 14, verse nos. 32-43 where the details of why Lord Ram decided to abandon Sita have been narrated.

Insofar as that was done, it was alright. But when the Lord did the Aswamedha Yagya or the horse sacrifice, as was required of him owing to his status as a great king and emperor of the realm, the need arose to have his wife alongside him to complete the formalities of the ritual. The only way out was to have an image of Sita by his side. That Lord Ram did so with a heavy heart, and instead of marrying someone else on this pretext that a wife was needed to complete the rituals proved how loyal he was to Sita, and how diligent he was to uphold the haloed, honourable and noble tradition of having only one wife in one’s lifetime.]

Verse no. 62:

विधेरधिकसंभारस्ततः प्रवृत्ते मखः।

आसन्यत्र क्रियाविघ्ना राक्षसा एव रक्षिणः॥ १५-६२

vidheradhikasambhārastataḥ pravavṛte makhaḥ |
āsanyatra kriyāvighnā rākṣasā eva rakṣiṇaḥ|| 15-62

15-62. In this majestic way, the horse sacrifice of Lord Ram commenced in a grand scale. The uniqueness of this sacrifice was that, one, the materials collected for undertaking it far exceeded the actual requirement (as huge gifts were brought by Sugriv and Vibhishan as well as countless other rulers), and two, the demons, who would usually create hurdles in the successful completion of such sacrifices, were themselves protecting it and lending their support to it (because their king Vibhishan was Lord Ram's friend, and he had personally arrived to help the Lord with its successful completion).

Verse no. 63:

अथ प्राचेतसोपज्ञम् रामायणमितस्ततः।

मैथिलेयौ कुशलवौ जगत्गुरुचोदितौ॥ १५-६३

atha prācetasopajñam rāmāyaṇamitastataḥ |
maithileyau kuśalavau jagaturgurucoditau|| 15-63

15-63. In the meantime, on the instructions of sage Valmiki, Lava and Kusha, Sita's two sons, would roam around in the surrounding hermitages and hamlets to melodiously sing the verses of the Ramayana which the sage had himself composed and taught it to these two charming young boys (who had learnt the entire epic by heart, and they would recite it with an emotional involvement in it).

Verse no. 64:

वृत्तम् रामस्य वाल्मीकेः कृतिस्तौ किंनरस्वनौ।

किम् तद्येन मनो हर्तुमलम् स्याताम् न शृण्वताम्॥ १५-६४

vṛttam rāmasya vālmīkeḥ kṛtistau kiṁnarasvanau |
kim tadyena mano hartumalam syātām na śṛṇvatām|| 15-64

15-64. There was no sweeter rendering of any poem than the ones Lava and Kusha sang. First of all, it had the divine story of Lord Ram as its central theme, secondly its lyrics were composed in perfect grammatical order by the learned and most skilled sage Valmiki himself as ordained by the creator Brahma himself, and third, it was sung by two young boys whose melodious voice not only rivalled but even excelled the sweetness of singing of heavenly singers called Kinnars. Who was there who would not become mesmerised and spell-bound upon hearing the two boys singing the verses of the Ramayana. All those who listened to the singing of the two young and charming boys would become enthralled, and they would hear them sing in rapt attention.

Verse no. 65:

रूपे गीते च माधुर्यतयोस्तज्जैर्निवेदितम्।

ददर्श सानुजो रामः शुश्राव च कुतूहली॥ १५-६५

rūpe gīte ca mādhyamāntayostajjñairniveditam |
dadarśa sānujo rāmaḥ śuśrāva ca kutūhalī|| 15-65

15-65. When this news reached the ears of Lord Ram, he summoned the two boys, and along with his other three brothers, the Lord heard Lava and Kusha sing the verses of the Ramayana (in his court). The Lord and his brothers heard the rendering of the Ramayana with rapt attention, and they were left spell-bound and astonished at the melodious way of singing as well as the beauty and the charm of the two young singers.

Verse no. 66:

तद्गीतश्रवणैकाग्रं संसदश्रुमुखी बभौ।
हिमनिष्यन्दिनी प्रातर्निर्वातेव वनस्थली॥ १५-६६

tadgītaśravaṇaikāgrā saṁsadaśrumukhī babhau |
himaṇiṣyandinī prātarnirvāteva vanasthalī|| 15-66

15-66. The whole court sat still and in rapt attention, silently hearing the singing by the two boys. Everyone present was so emotionally moved at the memory of Sita that tears rolled down the eyes of every person present just like the case of dew drops dripping from leaves, flowers and branches of trees during the early hours of a cold morning during the winter season.

Verse no. 67:

वयोवेषविसंवादि रामस्य च तयोस्तदा।
जनता प्रेक्ष्य सादृश्यम् नाक्षिकम्पम् व्यतिष्ठत॥ १५-६७

vayoveṣavisamvādi rāmasya ca tayostadā |
janatā prekṣya sādrśyam nākṣikampam vyatiṣṭhata|| 15-67

15-67. The assembly gazed fixedly at the two boys, and was stunned at the remarkable resemblance that the two young boys had with Lord Ram, there being only two exceptions--one, that the two boys were attired in the robes of a hermit while Lord Ram was dressed in royal robes, and the other exception pertained to their age, for while the two boys were of a tender young age whereas Lord Ram was an adult.

Verse no. 68:

उभयोर्न तथा लोकः प्रावीण्येन विसिष्मिये।
नृपतेः प्रीतिदानेषु वीतस्पृहतया यथा॥ १५-६८

ubhayorna tathā lokāḥ prāvīṇyena viśiṣmiye |
nṛpateḥ prītidāneṣu vītaspr̥hatayā yathā|| 15-68

15-68. The public was not so much astonished at the beautiful and melodious way the two boys had sung the verses of the epic which they had learnt from sage Valmiki as the way they had declined to accept the gifts that Lord Ram had affectionately wished to give them for their singing.

{It was customary for kings to extend courtesies by way of giving some kind of gift or reward to musicians, singers, dancers, as well as scholars and experts in various fields such as literature, art, scriptures etc. who attended their court. So therefore, impressed by the two young boys, Lord Ram wished to give them something as reward, but the boys refused to accept it. Never had it ever happened earlier that anyone would have the courage to refuse anything that the king gave him, as that would be tantamount to insulting the majesty of the king. So when Lava and Kusha politely declined to accept the gift that Lord Ram offered to them, it not only surprised but even sent shock-waves across the rank and file of the court. People wondered how Lord Ram will receive this rebuke.}

Verse no. 69:

**गेये को नु विनेता वाम् कस्य चेयम् कृतिः कवेः।
इति राजा स्वयम् पृष्टौ तौ वाल्मीकिमशंसताम्॥ १५-६९**

geye ko nu vinetā vām kasya ceyam kṛtiḥ kaveḥ |
iti rājñā svayam prṣṭau tau vālmīkimaśaṁsatām|| 15-69

15-69. When Lord Ram enquired from the two young singers who taught them the art of singing so melodiously, and whose composition was it that they were singing so beautifully, the two brothers disclosed to the Lord that their teacher and instructor was sage Valmiki.

Verse no. 70:

**अथ सावरजो रामः प्राचेतसमुपेयिवान्।
उरीकृत्यात्मनो देहम् राज्यमस्मै न्यवेदयत्॥ १५-७०**

atha sāvarajo rāmaḥ prācetasamupeyivān |
ūrīkṛtyātmāno deham rājyamasmai nyavedayat|| 15-70

15-70. Thereafter, Lord Ram went to meet sage Valmiki along with his three brothers. There, he offered the sage his entire kingdom in donation, only keeping his body for himself.

[Note--Lord Ram was so overwhelming obliged to the sage and full of gratitude for him that he offered everything he had to the sage. But sages of those times did not hanker after money and power as they believed in renunciation, modesty, penance and austerity. Their wealth was their spiritual powers and knowledge. Therefore, it is obvious that sage Valmiki did not accept anything.]

Verse no. 71:

स तावाख्याय रामाय मैथिलीयौ तदात्मजौ।

कविः कारुणिको वव्रे सीतायाः संपरिग्रहम्॥ १५-७१

sa tāvākhyāya rāmāya maithilīyau tadātmajau |
kaviḥ kāruṇiko vavre sītāyāḥ saṁparigrahaḥ|| 15-71

15-71. The most merciful and compassionate sage Valmiki told Lord Ram that the two boys, Lava and Kusha, were the sons of Sita, and therefore the Lord should accept them as well as their mother (Sita).

Verse no. 72:

तात शुद्धा समक्षम् नः स्नुषा ते जातवेदसि।

दौरात्म्याद्रक्षसस्ताम् तु नात्रत्याः श्रद्धधुः प्रजाः॥ १५-७२

tāta śuddhā samakṣam naḥ snuṣā te jātavedasi |
daurātmīyādrakṣasastām tu nātratyaḥ śraddadhuḥ prajāḥ|| 15-72

15-72. Lord Ram said to sage Valmiki: "Oh gracious Lord! Your daughter-in-law had already proved her innocence and purity by undergoing the fire-test, and I know that she is chaste, loyal, honest and immaculate. But the problem is different--the subjects of the kingdom harbour doubts about her character given the infamous reputation of Ravana in whose captivity she had to spend many days before I could free her. {This has caused nasty gossiping and scandalous accusations against me as well as her. This is the only reason why I had to leave her, and not because of any other reason whatsoever. I say this to you on solemn oath that I am convinced of her purity, but tongues are wagging in the kingdom.}

Verse no. 73:

ताः स्वचारित्र्यमुद्दिश्य प्रत्याययतु मैथिली।

ततः पुत्रवतीमेनाम् प्रतिपत्स्ये त्वदाज्ञया॥ १५-७३

tāḥ svacāritryamuddiśya pratyāyayatu maithilī |
tataḥ putravatīmenām pratipatsye tvadājñayā|| 15-73

15-73. Therefore, if Sita could prove her innocence before everyone in a full court to convince the subjects of the kingdom about the purity of her character, then surely I will accept my sons as well as her as you have advised me."

Verse no. 74:

इति प्रतिश्रुते राज्ञा जानकीमाश्रमान्मुनिः।

शिष्यैरानाययामास स्वसिद्धिम् नियमैरिव॥ १५-७४

iti pratiśrute rājñā jānakīmāśramānmuniḥ |
śiṣyairānāyayāmāsa svasiddhim niyamairiva|| 15-74

15-74. When the learned sage Valmiki heard this condition set by Lord Ram, he sent his disciples and called Sita from his hermitage as if the sage was summoning his spiritual accomplishments that he had obtained by means of doing various penances and austerities as well as other religious activities that he had been doing since a long time.

[Note--In this analogy, the disciples sent by the sage are likened to the many penances and austerities etc. that he had been doing, and Sita is likened to the fruit of these exercises. This is because just as the fruit of religious exercises is always good, honourable and noble, so Sita too was noble, honourable and immaculate. The sage was convinced of Sita's purity, and that is why he did not think twice in summoning her to prove herself before the full assembly (verse nos. 79-81 herein below). Here, the reputation of the sage was also at stake as much as that of Sita. He had sheltered her during her exile in the forest which is similar to her living in Ravana's place in far away Lanka, i.e. away from her husband.

When the sage heard the reason why Lord Ram had left her, he was extremely angry and peeved, and wanted to prove to the world how wrong every accuser was. If they can cast doubts on Sita's character because she lived away from her husband in Ravana's place, then they can also cast aspersions on sage Valmiki, scandalising that the two sons of Sita were not Lord Ram's but of any of the many sages who lived in and around sage Valmiki's hermitage, if not of the sage himself.

When Lord Ram declined to outright accept the exalted sage Valmiki's advice to accept Lava and Kusha as well as their mother, it is quite certain that it did not go down well with the sage as it was plain and simple disobedience. Was sage Valmiki lying; didn't Lord Ram trust him; was he an ordinary run-of-the-mill ascetic, and not one of the most revered and great sages of the time? How dare anyone could disobey him, and especially Lord Ram who was expected to have great respect for enlightened sages, and whose father, king Dashrath, was Valmiki's friend (refer: canto 14, verse no. 74)?

Sage Valmiki's annoyance with Lord Ram was aggravated when the Lord gave the reason for abandoning Sita--that she has lived for a long time with another man who was not her husband (i.e. with Ravana). The sage was not a fool not to understand the gravity of the matter. Sita had been living in his hermitage away from her husband, and it was in his hermitage that her two sons were born. If the rascals could accuse her of infidelity because she lived away from her husband in Ravana's custody in Lanka, then what guarantee was there that the same set of rascals won't raise doubts about her purity while she lived in the sage's custody in his hermitage?

Therefore, the sage put all his spiritual achievements and religious merits at stake to hit back at Lord Ram, as well as those rascals who had no other pastime than to blink at others and raise suspicions about their characters without bothering to find out the truth, by asking Sita to go through another round of proving her innocence and integrity because the sage was certain that she would emerge unscathed.

There were other reasons too why sage Valmiki became extremely annoyed with Lord Ram. One, the Lord had organised a huge horse sacrifice in which all the sages from the four quarters or corners of the world were invited (refer: canto 15, verse no. 59). Why didn't he invite sage Valmiki? In fact, the sage should have been at the head of the list of invitees as he had given shelter to Sita, the queen of the

kingdom and the wife of Lord Ram, something which in itself was enough to extend a special privileged invitation to the sage. Besides this angle, Valmiki was amongst the handful of great sages of the era, the others being Bharadwaj, Atri and Agastya (also known as sage Kumbhaj). All these sages were enlightened, self-realised and spiritually attained, and all of them had established their own hermitages where other sages, ascetics and hermits came to live to pursue their spiritual life as well as to learn about spiritualism and metaphysics.

The second reason is this: Why did Lord Ram not send any kind of help to the sage in material terms by way of donation, especially when he was aware this his wife has been given shelter by the sage when she had no one else to take care of her? This was specially offending because everyone praised Lord Ram as a king who was a merciful 'Prajapalak', i.e. a king who was compassionate and helpful to his subjects, and who did everything possible to take care of his subjects. Couldn't the Lord think that some kind of material help should be sent to sage Valmiki's hermitage so that he finds it easier to take care of the inmates living in his hermitage. Sita was not alone, there were many disciples of the sage, as well as daughters and lady seers and ascetics living there (refer: canto 14, verse no. 77; canto 15, verse no. 74).

Third: Why sage Valmiki alone, why could not Lord Ram--who had no compunctions or reservations in opening his purse-strings to liberally fund a large ceremony of the horse sacrifice--not spare some fund to send donations by way of charity to the hermitages of other sages, hermits and ascetics that were located within his realm? Was the Lord not famous and feted for being large-hearted, magnanimous, charitable and compassionate, or was he in reality a miser and self-pleasing selfish ruler who would splurge money where he got fame, and bite his teeth into each penny when it came to real and selfless charities?

In short, there was a cumulative collection of reasons that culminated in upsetting sage Valmiki. It will be seen shortly that when Lord Ram refused to heed the sage's advice to accept Lava and Kusha as his sons without Sita first proving herself in open court, the sage's anger would burst out in the open later on though he presently maintained decorum and dignity of both his own stature as well as that of Lord Ram because the latter was a 'king' of a great kingdom, a descendant of a noble line of kings coming down for ages from the ancient king Ikshwaku, and thirdly because Lord Ram himself was above reproach.

So therefore, when the sage took Sita with him to the Lord's court the next day, he avoided all formalities and bluntly came to the point by curtly asking Sita to stand up and prove her innocence before the full assembly (verse nos. 75-76, 79-80).

This was indeed a shameful event in the entire history of the honourable Ikshwaku dynasty--that a queen is made to prove her chastity, integrity and loyalty in full public view, before staring eyes, while her husband sat silently as a mute and impotent witness to this contemptible and reprehensible drama being enacted right under his nose, and not doing anything to stop it as he himself was responsible for the unfolding of this calamitous, sordid, and most ignominious event in the annals of the entire history of this famous race descending from kings Ikshwaku and Raghu.

And finally, here comes the fourth reason of sage's annoyance with Lord Ram. When the sage asked Sita before the assembly to prove her self, could not Lord Ram--let us not forget that he was a king whose word was deemed to be final in any dispute in a royal court over which he presided--immediately stand up and stop Sita from proceeding ahead by declaring that there was no need for her to prove her innocence because since sage Valmiki was vouching on her behalf, it was enough proof of her

innocence; no further proof was needed. But unfortunately, Lord Ram sat silently, unmoved.

Further, at this point of time, his friends Sugriv and Vibhishan were also present, as they had come to participate in the ongoing horse sacrifice (refer: verse no. 58 herein above). These two had witnessed Sita's fire-test in Lanka, before the party boarded the Pushpak plane for Ayodhya. Couldn't Lord Ram tell them to stand up and say on oath that Sita had already proved herself before them in Lanka itself, prior to Lord Ram's accepting her? Why did he keep mum? Is it that he himself had some kind of reservations against her character?

Sita was closely watching these developments, and was extremely hurt at the attitude of her husband. She did not want to suffer any further humiliation, and she did not want to impose herself on the Lord because she felt he was simply trying some excuse to avoid getting associated with her again. This is evident when Sita simply vowed that if she was indeed pure, then let Mother Earth accept her in her bowls, at which the earth opened up and a magnificent throne came up on which sat the deity of the earth. The deity accepted Sita in her lap, and the throne sank in the bowls of the earth as Sita vanished for all times to come (refer: verse nos. 81-84 herein below).

Sage Valmiki had first become angry with Lord Ram when he discovered Sita left abandoned and to fend for herself on the banks of river Tamsa (refer: canto 14, verse no. 73). The subsequent developments as outlined herein above enhanced the sage's frustration with him.]

Verse no. 75:

**अन्येद्युरथ काकुत्स्थः संनिपात्य पुरौकसः।
कविमाहवाययामास प्रस्तुतप्रतिपत्तये॥ १५-७५**

anyedyuratha kākutsthaḥ saṁnipātya puraukaśaḥ |
kavimāhvāyayāmāsa prastutapratipattaye|| 15-75

15-75. The next day, Lord Ram called a grand assembly where all the citizens were asked to attend. He also sent a message for sage Valmiki to come (as was planned the previous day at the sage's hermitage--refer: verse no. 73 herein above).

Verse no. 76:

**स्वरसंस्कारवत्यासौ पुत्राभ्यामथ सीतया।
ऋचेवोदर्चिषम् सूर्यम् रामम् मुनिरुपस्थितः॥ १५-७६**

svarasaṁskāravatyāsau putrābhyāmatha sītayā |
ṛcevodarciṣam sūryam rāmam munirupasthitaḥ|| 15-76

15-76. Sage Valmiki took along Sita and her two sons, Lava and Kusha, and presented himself in the court of Lord Ram. While Sita was going to Lord Ram with Lava and Kusha by her side, it reminded one of the famed Vedic hymn (Richa) known as the Gayatri Mantra that was approaching its deity, the brilliant Sun God, along with its correctly pronounced syllables and the combined divine effect of the hymn.

[Note--The 'Gayatri Mantra' is dedicated to the Sun-God. It invokes the powers of the brilliant Sun, and is regarded as one of the most powerful, effective and holy Vedic hymn. The effectiveness of the Gayatri Mantra depends on the correct pronunciation of its syllables, with correct intonation, and with full faith in its powers and effectiveness. Otherwise, it is a meaningless collection of letters.

In this metaphor, Lord Ram is the Sun, Sita is the Gayatri Mantra, and her two sons Lava and Kusha, who were articulate in speech and perfect in their intonation as they sang the verses of the Ramayana taught to them by sage Valmiki, were like the syllables of this Vedic hymn being chanted with correct intonation, devotion and faith.

Again, as the Sun is the illuminator of the world, is the source of energy, a receptacle of celestial fire, and deemed to be untainted, so was Lord Ram. Since the Gayatri Mantra is exclusively dedicated to the Sun, so was Sita exclusively devoted to Lord Ram. And as the syllables of this hymn are to be pronounced articulately, without fumbling and fidgeting, so was the way in which Lava and Kusha would sing the verses of the Ramayana as well as the Vedic hymns that sage Valmiki had taught them. Its indeed a fantastic imagery comparing Lord Ram, Sita and the two charming sons respectively to the Sun, the Gayatri Mantra, and the mesmerising effect it has when chanted rhythmically.]

Verse no. 77:

काषायपरिवीतेन स्वपदार्पितचक्षुषा।

अन्वमीयत शुद्धेति शान्तेन वपुषैव सा॥ १५-७७

kāṣāyaparivītena svapadārpitacakṣuṣā |
anvamīyata śuddheti śāntena vapuṣaiva sā|| 15-77

15-77. Attired in the ochre clothes of a hermit, and with her eyes lowered and fixed on her feet, Sita looked majestic and holiness personified with her calm and poised demeanours. {She showed no sign of uneasiness or tension of any kind. She walked with dignity and confidence, and appeared modest and humble.}

Verse no. 78:

जनास्तदालोकपथात्प्रतिसंहतचक्षुषः।

तस्थुस्तेऽवाङ्मुखाः सर्वे फलिता इव शालयः॥ १५-७८

janāstadālokapathātpṛtisamhṛtacakṣuṣaḥ |
tasthuste'vāṁmukhāḥ sarve phalitā iva śālayaḥ|| 15-78

15-78. When the citizens saw Sita, all of them lowered their heads in shame that they had falsely and without any ground accused this innocent and chaste lady with wrongdoing. With their lowered head the rows of citizens looked like rows of paddy-blades that have bent sideways under the weight of their grains.

[Note--The grains here refer to the guilt of the citizens which had weighed down heavily on their collective conscience. They sat with lowered heads burdened by the

weight of this guilt. The citizens avoided seeing her in the eye, and sat gloomily as if they were about to witness a disastrous event for which they themselves were responsible. And indeed it was so, for soon we shall read that Sita entered the bowls of the earth, and in due course of time Lord Ram too left this world along with his brothers (canto 15, verse nos. 98-103, and the city of Ayodhya, which was once a prosperous and wealthy city, was laid to ruin and decayed over time (canto 17, verse nos. 10-21).]

Verse no. 79:

ताम् दृष्टिविषये भर्तुर्मुनिरास्थितविष्टरः।

कुरु निःसंशयम् वत्से स्ववृत्ते लोकमित्यशात्॥ १५-७९

tām dr̥ṣṭivīṣaye bharturmunirāsthītaviṣṭarah |
kuru niḥsaṁśayam vatse svavṛtte lokamityaśāt|| 15-79

15-79. Sage Valmiki, who was seated on his seat, told Sita: "My daughter (vatse)! Remove the doubt that the citizens have regarding your character in the presence of your husband who shall bear witness to it."

Verse no. 80:

अथ वाल्मीकिशिष्येण पुण्यमावर्जितम् पयः।

आचम्योदीरयामास सीता सत्याम् सरस्वतीम्॥ १५-८०

atha vālmikīśiṣyena puṇyamāvarjitam payah |
ācamyodīrayāmāsa sītā satyām sarasvatīm|| 15-80

15-80. Then, Sita sipped some holy water that was poured in her cupped palm by a disciple of sage Valmiki, and then raising her other hand she made a solemn declaration as follows--

Verse no. 81:

वाङ्मनःकर्मभिः पत्यौ व्यभिचारो यथा न मे।

तथा विश्वंभरे देवि मामन्तर्धातुमर्हसि॥ १५-८१

vāṇmanaḥkarmabhiḥ patyau vyabhicāro yathā na me |
tathā viśvaṁbhare devi māmantardhātumarhasi|| 15-81

15-81. Sita declared: "If I had never violated my vows of loyalty towards my husband (Lord Ram), if I had never been unfaithful to him in any way, by my words, by my actions and by my thoughts--then, oh Mother Earth, please accept me in your lap."

[Note--It was a very poignant moment. Sita did not want to face the same humiliation again in her life. She was dismayed at Lord Ram's attitude towards her, and especially because he had turned a deaf ear to her pleas that Laxman, she was sure, must have

conveyed to him (refer: canto 14, verse nos. 61-68). It was humiliation at its worst that even though the exalted sage Valmiki had himself vouched for the purity of her character (refer: canto 14, verse no. 74; canto 15, verse no. 71), and her husband had himself acknowledged it (canto 15, verse no. 72), yet he still doubted her and is compelling her to publicly display her integrity (canto 15, verse no.73).

In these situations, what guarantee was there that she would be allowed to live a free and honourable life if she agrees to return home to Ayodhya? Was it not better to die than face sneers and taunts all her life? She decided that she would not go back to her husband who did not have any compassion for her, who had found an excuse to abandon her because in all probability he himself privately doubted her infidelity. If not, then why did he make her undergo a fire test in Lanka before accepting her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108-to Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 109. Also refer to Kalidas' Raghuvansham, Canto 12, verse no. 104 where it is briefly mentioned.}]

Verse no. 82:

एवमुक्ते तया साध्व्या रन्धात्सद्योभवद्भुवः।

शातह्रदमिव ज्योतिः प्रभामण्डलमुद्ययौ॥ १५-८२

evamukte tayā sādhyā randhrātsadyobhavādbhuvah |
śātahradamiva jyotiḥ prabhāmaṇḍalamudyayau|| 15-82

15-82. No sooner had Sita made this solemn declaration, than the earth beneath her feet split into two, and from the gap emerged a column of dazzling light that shone with the blinding brilliance of lightening (that emanates from the clouds).

[Note--There was a mighty rumble as if an earthquake was about to occur. Then the earth split from under Sita's feet and a streak of dazzling column of light emerged from this gap.]

Verse no. 83:

तत्र नागफणोत्क्षिप्तसिंहासननिषेदुषी।

समुद्ररशना साक्षात्प्रादुरासीद्वसुंधरा॥ १५-८३

tatra nāgaphaṇotkṣiptasimhāsanaṇiṣeduṣī |
samudraraśanā sāksātpṛādurāsīdvasuṇḍharā|| 15-83

15-83. On the crest of that brilliant column of light there was a splendorous throne supported on the hoods of a serpent. On this throne sat the deity representing Mother Earth. She wore a girdle represented by the ocean.

[Note--The oceans surround the earth, hence the deity representing the earth too had a circular ornament around her waist in the form of a tube-like girdle filled with water.]

Verse no. 84:

सा सीतामङ्कमारोप्य भर्तृप्रणिहितेक्षणाम्।
मामेति व्याहरत्येव तस्मिन्पातालमभ्यगात्॥ १५-८४

sā sītāmaṅkamāropya bhartṛpraṇihitekṣaṇām |
māmeti vyāharatyeva tasminpātālamabhyagāt|| 15-84

15-84. The deity invited Sita to sit on her lap, and soon thereafter, the throne sank in the bowls of the earth and the hole closed. Sita stared at Lord Ram with unblinking eyes as if to say final goodbye (as well as to vent her subdued anger at him) even as the stunned Lord said in horror 'stop, stop, what is this'. But it was to no avail, as by the time the Lord could react and lunge forward to catch Sita in his desperation to save her from sinking in the hole, she had already vanished into the deep bowls of the earth (the Patal Loka) and gone forever.

[Note--During the final moments, Sita glared at Lord Ram and looked directly into his eyes, as if saying goodbye to him without uttering a word, as well as condemning him for all the ignominious events that has led her to make a decision to die. On the one hand she was overcome with grief and sadness, so her eyes might have been blurred with tears, and on the other hand she was so dismayed and angry at her husband that he mistrusted her that her eyes appeared to be burning red with a fire of disdain and repugnance for him. Surely it would have been a mixed feeling of both a grief-laden last goodbye, as well as a look of loathing for him because she had been subjected to excessive humiliation just because some inconsequential citizen said some nasty thing about her, and that her husband had preferred to punish her instead of the scandalous, lowly and irresponsible accuser. What a shame!]

Verse no. 85:

धरायाम् तस्य संरम्भम् सीताप्रत्यर्पणैषिणः।
गुरुर्विधिबलापेक्षी शमयामास धन्विनः॥ १५-८५

dharāyām tasya saṁrambham sītāpratyaṛpaṇaiṣiṇaḥ |
gururvidhibalāpekṣī śamayāmāsa dhanvinaḥ|| 15-85

15-85. Lord Ram was extremely exasperated and unnerved, and became very angry at Mother Earth when he realised that the deity of the earth had herself come to take Sita away from him for all times to come (as narrated in verse nos. 82-84 herein above).

Peeved, ashamed at himself and overcome with guilt at his hypocritical actions (of abandoning Sita in order to prove to his slanderous subjects that he himself was beyond reproach), which had culminated in this sad development that had permanently separated him from Sita, and unable to restrain himself any longer, he raised his bow to punish the earth and pierce it with his formidable arrows so as to rupture it and split into smithereens, and to pull out Sita from the bowls of the earth wherever she might be.

At that moment, sages Vashistha and Valmiki intervened to console Lord Ram, calm him down, and soothe his hurt feelings. They prevailed upon him and gave him wise council so as to disarm him, and not get distracted from the path of Dharma by sentiments or emotions, saying that the will of the all-powerful destiny cannot be

countermanded; no one can go against what is written in one's fate and ordained by destiny; no living being is exempt from the writ of destiny; no one is above the dictate of destiny. {To wit, it is futile to go against laws of Creation and Nature, that anything or anyone that is born is bound to depart from this mortal world, and no one is above this sacrosanct law of creation.}

One must therefore, they told Lord Ram, patiently accept what destiny commands, and he should particularly be very careful not to go against it because he is the flag-bearer of Dharma in all its forms (i.e. rules of right conduct and propriety in all spheres of life). He is expected to set an example for others to follow with respect to the virtues of calmness, dispassion, renunciation, self-discipline, wisdom, patience, forbearance, fortitude, and a sense of righteousness and propriety of action and behaviour in matters of public as well as personal life.

Being impatient and taking any rough action driven by emotions on the spur of the moment is never a good thing to do.

Verse no. 86:

ऋषीन्विसृज्य यजान्ते सुहृदश्च पुरस्कृतान्।
रामः सीतागतम् स्नेहम् निदधे तदपत्ययोः॥ १५-८६

r̥ṣīnvisr̥jya yajñānte suhṛdaśca puraskṛtān |
rāmaḥ sītāgatam sneham nidadhe tadapatyayoḥ|| 15-86

15-86. Somehow, Lord Ram finished his horse sacrifice and bid goodbye to all the guests such as the invited sages and his friends. After that, the Lord showered a bounty of his love and affection on his two sons (Lava and Kusha) as he would have shown to Sita (ensuring that they are kept so happy, engaged and entertained that they would not miss their mother).

[Note--The two beautiful and sweet sons reminded Lord Ram of Sita, and in her absence, and driven by a desire of repentance for the wrong done to her, he poured all his bounty of love and affection on the two lovely sons, Lava and Kusha. They were pampered and taken good care of. The Lord ensured that they would get so much love and caring attention from him that they would not miss their mother.]

Verse no. 87:

युधाजितस्य संदेशात्स देशम् सिन्धुनामकम्।
ददौ दत्तप्रभावाय भरताय भृतप्रजः॥ १५-८७

yudhājitasya saṁdeśātsa deśam sindhunāmakam |
dadau dattaprabhāvāya bharatāya bhṛtaprajaḥ|| 15-87

15-87. Lord Ram, who was ever ready to look after the welfare of his subjects, granted the full sovereign authority over the kingdom of Sindhu to his influential brother Bharat, as advised by the maternal uncle of Bharat.

Verse no. 88:

भरतस्तत्र गन्धर्वान्युधि निर्जित्य केवलम्।

आतोदयम् ग्राहयामास समत्याजयदायुधम्॥ १५-८८

bharatastatra gandharvānyudhi nirjitya kevalam |
ātodyam grāhayāmāsa samatyājayadāyudham|| 15-88

15-88. Bharat vanquished the Gandharvas (classical musicians of heaven who were previously rulers of this kingdom) and disarmed them by taking away their bows, but left the musical instrument called the lute with them so that they could carry on with their profession of singing and playing music.

[Note--The kingdom of Sindhu was situated on both sides of river Indus. Previously, the Gandharvas had a hold over this area. So Bharat disarmed them by taking away their weapon, the bow, but let them retain their hereditary musical instrument the lute so that they can carry on with their profession as musicians and singers.]

Verse no. 89:

स तक्षपुष्कलौ पुत्रौ राजधान्योस्तदाख्ययोः।

अभिषिच्याभिषेकार्हौ रामान्तिकमगात्पुनः॥ १५-८९

sa takṣapuṣkalau putrau rājadhānyostadākhyayoh |
abhiṣicyābhiṣekārhaū rāmāntikamagātpunah|| 15-89

15-89. Bharat had two sons named Taksha and Pushkal. He established two independent capitals named after the two sons, i.e. 'Takshashila' after his son Taksha, and 'Pushkalawati' after his son Pushkal. Having duly consecrated the two sons on these two newly founded capital cities, Bharat returned home to Ayodhya.

[Note--Earlier, Shatrughan had also done the same by establishing his two sons as rulers of two independent states and then returned home to Ayodhya. Refer: verse no. 36 of this canto 15 herein above.]

Verse no. 90:

अङ्गदम् चन्द्रकेतुम् च लक्ष्मणोऽप्यात्मसंभवौ।

शासनाद्रघुनाथस्य चक्रे कारापथेश्वरौ॥ १५-९०

aṅgadam candraketum ca lakṣmaṇo'pyātmasaṁbhavau |
śāsanādraghunāthasya cakre kārāpatheśvarau|| 15-90

15-90. On the instructions of Lord Ram, his brother Laxman anointed his two sons named Angad and Chitraketu as the rulers of the kingdom of Karapath (pronounced 'kārāpatha').

Verse no. 91:

इत्यारोपितपुत्रास्ते जननीनाम् जनेश्वराः।

भर्तृलोकप्रपन्नानाम् निवापान्विदधुः क्रमात्॥ १५-९१

ityāropitaputrāste jananīnām janeśvarāḥ |
bharṭṛlokaprapannānām nivāpānvidadhuḥ kramāt|| 15-91

15-91. In this way, after the four brothers had established their sons in their respective kingdoms, they completed the funeral rites of their late mothers who had joined their late husband, king Dashrath, in heaven.

[Note--Though it has not been mentioned anywhere when the mothers of Lord Ram (Kaushalya), Bharat and Shatrughan (Kaikeyi) and Laxman (Sumitra) died, but by the reading of this present verse it is abundantly that they were dead.]

Verse no. 92:

उपेत्य मुनिवेशोऽथ कालः प्रोवाच राघवम्।

रहःसंवादिनौ पश्येदावाम् यस्तम् त्यजेरिति॥ १५-९२

upetya muniveṣo'tha kālaḥ provāca rāghavam |
rahaḥsaṁvādināu paśyedāvām yastam tyajeriti|| 15-92

15-92. After all these worldly obligations were done with, one day the god of death disguised himself as a hermit and came to meet Lord Ram. He told the Lord that he wants to discuss something with him in private, and the condition was that if anyone comes before my talk with you is over, you shall abandon him right away. I need absolute privacy and confidentiality.

Verse no. 93:

तथेति प्रतिपन्नाय विवृतात्मा नृपाय सः।

आचख्यौ दिवमध्यास्व शासनात्परमेष्ठिनः॥ १५-९३

tatheti pratipannāya vivṛtātmā nṛpāya saḥ |
ācakhyau divamadhyāsva śāsanātparameṣṭhinaḥ|| 15-93

15-93. When Lord Ram gave him the necessary consent, then the god of death, known as 'Kaal', revealed his true identity to the Lord and told him that he has come on the instructions of the creator Brahma who had sent a message for the Lord that his time to wind up the affairs in the world has come, and that now he should ascend to heaven to live in his heavenly abode of Vaikuntha (the abode of Lord Vishnu who had manifested as Lord Ram).

Verse no. 94:

विद्वानपि तयोर्द्वःस्थः समयम् लक्ष्मणोऽभिनत्।
भीतो दुर्वाससः शापाद्रामसंदर्शनार्थिना॥ १५-९४

vidvānapi tayordvāḥsthaḥ samayam lakṣmaṇo'bhinat |
bhīto durvāsasaḥ śāpādrāmasaṁdarśanārthinā|| 15-94

15-94. As was the dictate of destiny and the fiat of fate, while Kaal was talking with Lord Ram and Laxman was appointed by the Lord to guard the door so that no one walks in, right at that time a sage named Durbasa came to urgently meet the Lord. When Laxman tried to persuade him to wait a while as the Lord was engaged in some very confidential discussion with another guest, the sage, who was famous for his short temper and impatient nature, became furious, saying he can't wait, and if he is not allowed entry instantly he would curse everyone.

Laxman was aware of this sage's mercurial nature, so to avoid the sage from cursing everyone, Laxman thought it wise that he should go and inform the Lord even though it meant that as per the condition given to Kaal, it was a foregone conclusion that the Lord would abandon him (Laxman). But there was no other option left before Laxman.

Verse no. 95:

स गत्वा सरयूतीरम् देहत्यागेन योगवित्।
चकारावितथाम् भ्रातुः प्रतिज्ञाम् पूर्वजन्मनः॥ १५-९५

sa gatvā sarayūtīram dehatyāgena yogavit |
cakārāvitathām bhrātuḥ pratijñām pūrvajanmanah|| 15-95

15-95. Not allowing Lord Ram to become embarrassed by asking Laxman to leave and go anywhere he likes as per the condition laid down by Kaal (as narrated in verse no. 92 herein above), Laxman decided to voluntarily leave everything, and he went to the banks of river Saryu and gave up his mortal body by undertaking some Yoga exercise by which his Pran (life sustaining vital wind) exited from his body while his mortal remains were consumed by the self-ignited fire of meditation.

In this honourable way, Laxman kept the promise of his brother Lord Ram without putting the latter into an embarrassing situation of asking him to go, and at the same time indicated that the time of the end of the present generation has come.

[Note--Though it is not clearly articulated how Laxman died, but in all probability he collected firewood, lit a fire, sat on it, and withheld his breath. Soon, the end came.

Besides this immediate provocation of sage Durbasa, Laxman had long lost all interest in life after being compelled to become instrumental in the abandonment of Sita. Her wailings and lamentations haunted him day and night, and he was waiting for an opportunity to leave this wicked world. That opportunity finally came.

He had developed a lot of sympathy and empathy with Sita, and after quietly witnessing the subsequent developments, his respect for Lord Ram was also compromised to a great extent. It ought to be noted here that the Creator knew what went on in Laxman's heart, and so it was so arranged that while all other brothers left

this world together, Laxman did not accompany them and went all alone wherever his destiny took him.]

Verse no. 96:

तस्मिन्नात्मचतुर्भागे प्राङ्नाकमधितस्थुषि।

राघवः शिथिलम् तस्थौ भुवि धर्मस्त्रिपादिव॥ १५-९६

tasminnātmacaturbhāge prāñnākamadhitasthuṣi |
rāghavaḥ śithilam tasthau bhuvi dharmastripādiva|| 15-96

15-96. When Lord Ram came to know about Laxman's death, he was completely devastated because he not only loved his younger brother like his own son, but treated him, along with his other three brothers, as an inseparable part of his life. With Laxman no more, Lord Ram felt as if a fourth part of his self had been sheared off him. He felt crippled and lame just like Dharma which loses one quarter of its whole identity and retains only three parts in Treta Yuga¹.

[Note--¹The word 'treta' itself means three parts. Dharma was blooming during Sata Yuga, then only three parts of it was left in Treta Yuga, which was further reduced to two parts in Dwapar Yuga (dwapar = two), and in Kali Yuga, only one half survived, resulting in darkness (Kali = dark).

The reason why Lord Ram had a special soft corner in his heart for Laxman is very obvious--it was Laxman who had gone with the Lord to the forest despite there being no compulsion for him to do so. He shared all the sufferings and pains of exile with Lord Ram and Sita. When Sita was abducted by Ravana and Lord Ram had been so dejected that he almost fainted, it was Laxman who gave moral support to the Lord and encouraged him not to lose hope, that if they made efforts then she would certainly be found and recovered. During the ferocious war of Lanka, Laxman stood by the side of the Lord and fought with him, suffering grave injuries in the process. Lord Ram trusted him the most, and with his death there is no wonder that Lord Ram's heart sank. He had already lost his wife Sita, and with the loss of Laxman the Lord decided that there is no more attraction in living longer. To wit, Lord Ram lost the will to live any more.]

Verse nos. 97:

स निवेश्य कुशावत्याम् रिपुनागाङ्कुशम् कुशम्।

शरावत्याम् सताम् सूक्तैर्जनिताश्रुलवम् लवम्॥ १५-९७

sa niveśya kuśāvatyām ripunāgāṅkuśam kuśam |
śarāvatyām satām sūktairjanitāśrulavam lavam|| 15-97

15-97. Lord Ram who had a calm mind and took decisions after due thought, gave his son Kusha, who was a vanquisher of enemies much like a goad that can control even the wildest of elephants, the kingdom of Kushwati (in the northern half of the vast kingdom of Ayodhya).

To his other son Lava, who had such sweet manners and a pleasant voice that he could make his audience shed tears out of his wit, humour and pleasant talks, Lord Ram gave the other half of the kingdom with its capital at Sharaavati (also known as Shravasti).

[Note--The kingdom of Ayodhya was also known as Kosal. This great and extended kingdom was divided into two parts--viz. the northern Kosal with its capital at Shravasti was given to Lava, and the southern Kosal with its capital at Kushvati which was given to Kusha. Kushvati was situated on the slopes of the Vindhya mountain range.]

Verse no. 98:

उदकप्रतस्थे स्थिरधीः सानुजोऽग्निपुरःसरः।
अन्वितः पतिवात्सल्याद्गृहवर्जमयोध्यया॥ १५-९८

udakpratasthe sthiradhīḥ sānujo'gnipuraḥsarah |
anvitaḥ pativātsalyādgṛhavarjamayodhyayā|| 15-98

15-98. After that, Lord Ram called his remaining two brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, and with a pot containing consecrated fire, called the 'Agni hotra fire', in the vanguard of the procession, the three brothers exited from the city of Ayodhya to embark on their last journey out of their favourite city. They headed northwards (towards river Saryu).

When the citizens heard that their beloved king has bid goodbye to the city on his final journey to heaven, they became impatient themselves to follow Lord Ram. So, the entire city emptied out as every person left his or her home and followed the Lord from behind.

Verse no. 99:

जगृहुस्तस्य चित्तज्ञाः पदवीम् हरिराक्षसाः।
कदम्बमुकुलस्थूलैरभिवृष्टाम् प्रजाश्रुभिः॥ १५-९९

jagrḥustasya cittajñāḥ padavīm harirākṣasāḥ |
kadambamukulasthūlairabhivṛṣṭām prajāśrubhiḥ|| 15-99

15-99. Lord Ram friends from Lanka and Kishkindha, i.e. the demons as well as the monkeys and bears respectively, also followed suit by following the Lord from the rear of the procession consisting of citizens of the city of Ayodhya.

The path on which Lord Ram walked had become wet by the tears that were shed by the countless citizens who followed him. These tears were large like fruits of the kadamba tree and the mukul tree (kadambamukula)¹.

[Note--¹The Kadamba tree is called 'burflower tree', and its botanical name is 'Neolamarckia cadamba'. It has large fruits.

The Mukul tree is called guggal tree in local dialect. Its botanical name is 'Commiphora wightii' or the Indian bedellium tree. Its more common name is 'common myrrh tree'.

The idea is that the citizens shed an abundance of tears that wetted the path on which the procession moved.]

Verse no. 100:

उपस्थितविमानेन तेन भक्तानुकम्पिना।

चक्रे त्रिदिवनिःश्रेणिः सरयूरनुयायिनाम्॥ १५-१००

upasthitavimānena tena bhaktānukampinā |
cakre tridivaniḥśreṇiḥ sarayūranuyāyinām|| 15-100

15-100. Lord Ram, who was always gracious towards his devotees, himself boarded a divine plane (probably the Pushpak plane) and went to his primary abode in the heaven¹, leaving the rest to use river Saryu as a ladder to heaven².

[Note--¹Though it is not explicitly mentioned here, but surely enough Lord Ram took his two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, along when he boarded the plane to heaven. It is simply unthinkable that the Lord went alone, leaving his two brothers, who were like a part of his own self, behind. Laxman had already gone to heaven a day earlier--refer: verse nos. 95-96.

²What is meant here is that anyone who wished to go to heaven would take a bath in the river Saryu that would pave his path to heaven, and those who had second thoughts would not take a bath and stayed behind. Lord Ram did not compel anyone to leave this world, it was their own choice. But the reality was that every single citizen of Ayodhya loved Lord Ram so much that to live without him was unbearable and unthinkable for them. So therefore, everyone went to heaven so much so that the heaven became so overcrowded that Lord Ram had to establish a parallel heaven to accomodate everybody--refer: verse no. 102 herein below.]

Verse no. 101:

यद्गोप्रतरकल्पोऽभूत्समर्दस्तत्र मज्जताम्।

अतस्तदाख्यया तीर्थम् पावनम् भुवि पप्रथे॥ १५-१०१

yadgopratarakalpo'bhūtsamṛdastatra majjatām |
atastadākhyayā tīrtham pāvanam bhuvi paprathe|| 15-101

15-101. There was such a huge crowd on the banks of river Saryu as if a large number of cowherds had gathered to take their herds across the river at evening time. At that time of the day, the surface of the river is packed with cows and other cattle who swim across the water's surface to reach their sheds on the opposite bank of the river. This sight gave the place the name of 'go-pratara' (go = gau= cow, and pratara = swimming to reach the other side). And from that time, this spot became famous because anyone who wished to go to heaven can easily do it by bathing here.

[Note--This general rule does not mean that one spends his life sinfully in the hope that he would attain heaven by simply bathing in river Saryu. No, it will definitely not happen. What actually is meant here is that even if a person had done wrong in his life and realises that he had been doing wrong, then he must be given at least one chance for redemption if he is sincere about his repentance. So first of all he should repent for his sins, make amends, promise to himself that no matter what happens he would not commit sins any longer, and he must have the courage to stand before those whom he had wronged to ask for forgiveness, it is only then such a man should be given a chance to go to heaven. Once he has sincerely repented, then it should not be made to appear that the laws of Dharma are so blind and rigid and heartless as to have blocked the path to his liberation and deliverance for all times to come for some mistakes of his in the past; the person must be compassionately treated. This would also inspire others to give up their sinful lives and repent. Hence, the provisions mentioned in this verse--that anyone who bathes in the holy water of river Saryu would go to heaven--must be read and interpreted with a sensible mind, and not by blindly sticking to its words.]

Verse no. 102:

**स विभुर्विबुधांशेषु प्रतिपन्नात्ममूर्तिषु।
त्रिदशीभूतपौराणाम् स्वर्गान्तरमकल्पयत्॥ १५-१०२**

sa vibhurvibudhāṁśeṣu pratipannātmamūrṭiṣu |
tridaśībhūtapaurāṇām svargāntaramakalpayat|| 15-102

15-102. The bears and monkeys, who were actually different gods who came down from the heaven to help Lord Vishnu successfully accomplish the task of elimination of the scourge of the cruel demons¹, also left their worldly forms and reverted back to their original forms as different gods.

Since everybody, i.e. all the citizens of Ayodhya (refer: verse nos. 98-101 herein above), wished to go to heaven to stay with their beloved Lord Ram, and all attained heaven, there was so much jostling and overcrowding there that the Lord had to plan and establish another parallel heaven to accommodate all of them².

[Note--¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187-to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 188; (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-32.

²Not a single person stayed behind even though Lord Ram had left the choice to them if they wished to go to heaven or stay behind when he declared that anyone who wished to go to heaven ought to first take a bath in river Saryu and then leave their mortal body--refer: verse no. 100. The citizens of Ayodhya loved their Lord so much that the very idea of living without the Lord in their midst was unbearable and unthinkable for them. That the whole of Ayodhya followed Lord Ram to heaven has also been narrated in detail in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9.]

Verse no. 103:

निर्वर्त्यैवम् दशमुखशिरश्छेदकार्यम्
 सुराणाम्विश्वक्सेनः स्वतनुमविशत्सर्वलोकप्रतिष्ठाम्।
 लङ्कानाथम् पवनतनयम् चोभयम् स्थापयित्वा
 कीर्तिस्तम्भद्वयमिव गिरौ दक्षिणे चोत्तरे च॥ १५-१०३

nirvartyaivam daśamukhaśiraśchedakāryam surāṇām
 viṣvakṣeṇaḥ svatanumaviśatsarvalokapraṭiṣṭhām |
 laṅkānātham pavanatanayam cobhayam sthāpayitvā
 kīrtistambhadvayamiva girau dakṣiṇe cottare ca|| 15-103

15-103. In this way¹, Lord Vishnu accomplished the work of eliminating the scourge of the evil demons lead by Ravana as requested by the gods.

At the time of his departure, Lord Ram asked Hanuman and Vibhishan to stay behind in this world. The Lord ordained that Hanuman live in the mountains of the Himalayas in the north, and Vibhishan establish himself in Mt. Trikoot where Lanka was present. In this way, Lord Ram established them as his two symbolic pillars to guard the realm from the north by Hanuman, and the south by Vibhishan.

After that, Lord Ram resumed his original form as the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being who represents the entire creation and embodies every aspect of it, the visible as well as the invisible, in his cosmic form.

[Note--¹As narrated in Kalidas' Raghuvansham, Canto nos. 10-15.]

इति कालिदास कृत रघुवंश महाकाव्ये पञ्चदशः सर्गः

iti kālīdāsa kṛta raghuvaṁśa mahākāvye pañcadaśaḥ sargaḥ

Thus ends this 15h chapter of Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

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PART B, Chapter 4:

Section 4.1

Lord Ram's Immediate Ancestors

Srimad Bhagwat, Canto or Skandha no. 9; Chapter or Sarga no. 9, verse nos. 1-49:

This Chapter describes the line of kings from Anshuman (Amśumān) to Khatvanga (Khaṭvāṅga), the immediate ancestors of Lord Ram. The entire Skandha or Canto no. 9 is dedicated to narrating a long list of kings of the Suryavansha, the Solar Dynasty, in which Lord Ram was born.

While the Lord Ram's story itself is narrated in Chapter nos. 10 and 11 of Canto no. 9 of Srimad Bhagwat, and since the main focus of our book is the narration of the story of the 'Ramayana', so therefore we have already read about it in detail in Part A, Chapter 2 of our book, but at the same time it will also be interesting to read a little more about the great family in which Lord Ram was born.

So with this objective, our endeavour now will be to briefly read about Lord Ram's immediate ancestors or predecessors for some generations preceding him, starting from the most famous king Bhagirath and his grandfather Anshuman, who himself was the grandson of king Sagar after whom the oceans were named as 'Sagar' (pronounced as Saagar) as narrated in Srimad Bhagwat, Skandha (Canto) 9, Adhyaaya (Chapter) 9.

We shall skip the histories of all previous kings going back centuries in the past as narrated in Canto 9, Chapter nos. 1-8 of Srimad Bhagwat as it will be superfluous and an unnecessary digression or diversion from the main theme of our book, which is Lord Ram and his story.

That said, let us now have brief summary of what Canto 9, Chapter 9 of Srimad Bhagwat says.

King Anshuman (Amśumān) was a noble king of the Solar Dynasty or the Surya-Kul in which Lord Ram was born. He was the son of Asmanjas, and he became the king of Ayodhya after the death of his grandfather, king Sagar after whom the oceans were named 'Sagar/Saagar'. It was king Anushuman's grandson named Bhagirath (Bhagīratha) who brought the flow of the holy river Ganges from heaven down to earth.

The son of king Anshuman was king Dilip who tried to bring the holy heavenly river Ganges down from heaven to this world, but he died without success. King Dilip's son was king Bhagirath, and he was determined to bring the Ganges to the material world. With this purpose in mind, he did penances and undertook severe austerities. Mother Ganges, being fully satisfied by his Tapa (penance and austerities), revealed herself before him, and asked him to seek some blessing or boon that he desired.

Bhagirath then sought a boon that his forefathers may be delivered by her, and this meant that she has to come down from heaven to earth. Mother Ganges agreed, but she set two conditions; first, she wanted that there must be someone able to control the force of her descending currents from heaven, and second, although all

sinful men would be freed from the consequences of their sins by bathing in the Ganges, but Mother Ganges did not want to keep all the dirt and filth with herself. These two conditions were subject matters for consideration.

King Bhagirath replied to Mother Ganges, "Oh divine and gracious Mother! Lord Shiva is very competent to control the force of your currents as they descend from heaven with a tremendous force. That settles your first condition. As for the second condition, you are so holy and purifying yourself that all negativity associated with the sins of people who take a bath in your holy waters will automatically be neutralised without any further effort; they simply can't contaminate you or stick to you like oil can never mix with water to become one homogenous fluid, they always remain separate from each other."

Now, Bhagirath had to do penance to please Lord Shiva and make him agree to accept the currents of river Ganges as they descended from high above in the heaven. Since Lord Shiva is very easy to please, and therefore called 'Ashutosh', he readily agreed to Bhagirath's request to check the force of the Ganges.

Once on earth, Bhagirath led the Ganges to the remains of his forefathers, and all of them were delivered and went to heaven.

The son of Bhagirath was called Shruta (*Śruta*), and his son was Naabha (*Nābha*). Naabha's son was Sindhudvipa (*'Sindhudvīpa'*; after whom the Indian subcontinent was named).

The son of Sindhudvipa was Ayutaayu (*Ayutāyu*), and the latter's son was Rituparna (*Rtūparṇa*). Rituparna was a friend of Nalaraja (*Nalarāja*) to whom he taught the art of gambling, and in return learnt the art known as 'Ashva Vidya', i.e. the skill related to all aspects of dealing with and controlling horses.

The son of Rituparna was known as Sarvakam (or *Sarvakāma*); the son of Sarvakam was Sudas (or *Sudāsa*), who was also known as Kalmashpada (or *Kalmāṣapāda*). The wife of Sudas was named Damyanti, also known as Madyanti.

Now it unfortunately so happened that due to some of his misconducts and sinful acts, Sudas was cursed by sage Vashistha (the priest of the dynasty in which Lord Ram was born; the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya) to become a flesh eating demon (a *Rākṣasa*), someone who ate raw flesh like animals do. While walking through the forest one day, Sudas saw a Brahmin couple engaged in sex. Driven by the curse, Sudas wanted to devour the male Brahmin. The female partner of the Brahmin pleaded with Sudas in many ways to excuse him, but Sudas wouldn't listen, and he lunged forward to grab the male and immediately began to devour him just like a lion devours its prey. The female Brahmin became furious and she cursed Sudas as follows: "Oh you cruel and merciless wretch! I curse you that as soon as you engage in sex in your life, you will die."

Therefore, after twelve years even though Sudas was released from the curse of sage Vashistha, he remained sonless. At that time, with Sudas' permission, Vashistha impregnated his wife named Madayanti. But even after bearing the child in her womb for many years, she could not give birth to it, sage Vashistha struck her abdomen with a stone, and thus a son was born. The son was named Ashmak (or *Aśmaka*), meaning a child born by being struck with a stone.

The son of Ashmak was known as Balika (*Bālīka*). He was always surrounded by women, so much so that once this circle of women protected him from the curse of sage Parashuram (*Paraśurāma*). This is why Balika was also called 'Nari-Kavach' (*Nārīkavaca*), i.e. one who uses women to act as a shield to protect himself. Balika

gave rise to other kings of the Kshatriya race, the warrior race, and he is often called 'Mulak (Mūlaka)', i.e. the root from which the Kshatriya race expanded.

Balika's son was Dashrath. {This gentleman was different from king Dashrath who was the father of Lord Ram.}. Dashrath's son was Aidavidi (or Aīḍavidī), and the latter's son was Vishvasaha (Viśvasaha).

The son of Vishvasaha was the great king Khatvanga (Khaṭvāṅga). He joined the demigods (or the junior gods in the heavenly hierarchy) in fighting the demons and was victorious, at which the demigods were very pleased with him and wanted to give him some boon. But when king Khatvanga inquired how long he would live and was told that the tenure of his life had come to an end and that he would last only a few seconds more, he immediately realised the futility of world and its pursuit. He spent the little time that was left to meditate upon the Supreme Being, and thus attained liberation from the cycle of transmigration and deliverance for his soul in a very short time.

Before proceeding with our reading of the full text of this chapter of Srimad Bhagwat, let us list the names of the kings, the immediate predecessors of Lord Ram, as mentioned in the present chapter.

King Asmanjas >> Anshuman >> Dilip >> Bhagirath >> Shruta >> Naabha >> Sindhudvipa >> Ayutaayu >> Rituparna >> Sarvakam >> Sudas >> Ashmak >> Balika (also called Nari-Kavach or Mulak) >> Dashrath (the 1st) >> Aidavidi >> Vishvasaha >> Khatvanga.

With this brief introduction, now let us read the full text in detail as follows:

Verse no. 1

श्रीशुक उवाच

अंशुमांश्च तपस्तेपे गङ्गानयनकाम्यया ।

कालं महान्तं नाशकनोत् ततः कालेन संस्थितः ॥ १ ॥

śrī-śuka uvāca

aṁśumāṁś ca tapas tepe gaṅgānayana-kāmyayā /

kālaṁ mahāntaṁ nāśaknot tataḥ kālena saṁsthitaḥ //1//

1- Sage Shukdeo continued his narration to king Parikshit: "King Anshuman (Aṁśumān) performed penances and observed austerities for a very long time like his grandfather (king Sagar). In spite of his best efforts, Anshuman failed to bring the holy river to earth from the heaven, and in due course of time he died.

Verse no. 2:

दिलीपस्तत्सुतस्तद्वदशक्तः कालमेयिवान् ।

भगीरथस्तस्य सुतस्तेपे स सुमहत् तपः ॥ २ ॥

dilīpas tat-sutas tadvad aśaktaḥ kālameyivān /

bhagīrathastasya sutastepe sa sumahat tapaḥ //2//

2- Anshuman's son was king Dilip (Dilīpa). He too failed to bring river Ganges from heaven to earth, and when the time came he too died.

Dilip's son was king Bhagirath (Bhagīratha). He decided that no matter what happens, he would fulfil the desire of his ancestors to bring river Ganges from heaven to earth. So therefore, Bhagirath did severe penance and observed strict austerities to achieve his aim of bringing the river down from heaven to earth.

Verse no. 3:

दर्शयामास तं देवी प्रसन्ना वरदास्मि ते ।

इत्युक्तः स्वमभिप्रायं शशंसावनतो नृपः ॥ ३ ॥

darśayāmāsa taṁ devī prasannā varadāsmi te /
ityuktaḥ svamabhiprāyaṁ śaśaṁsāvanato nṛpaḥ //3//

3- Pleased by his dedication and penances, the deity representing river Ganges appeared before king Bhagirath and said: "Oh King! I am pleased with you and wish to reward you for the penances and austerities you have done. So therefore, ask what boon or blessing you wish to have from me."

The king bowed his head before the deity representing the holy river Ganges and told her what he desired to have as a boon.

[Note--King Bhagirath had a desire to provide deliverance to his forefathers who had been reduced to ashes by the curse of sage Kapil. The story in brief is as follows:

Once when the legendary king Sagar of the Ikshwaku race, also known as the Solar Race, performed a fire horse sacrifice, known as the Aswamedha Yagya, the sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra, the king of gods who was ever so rapacious for power and perniciously jealous of great sages and kings performing fire sacrifices, because he feared that if they are successful then his supremacy in creation would be compromised. Indra hid the horse in the hermitage of sage Kapil. When king Sagar's sixty-thousand sons went searching for the horse in all corners of the earth, they dug the whole earth which got filled with water. This is how the ocean was formed. However, they found the horse tied in sage Kapil's hermitage. Obviously they thought that the horse was stolen by Kapil to prevent their father from completing the sacrifice. So they attacked the innocent sage, who was so taken aback that he became infuriated and cursed them to be reduced to ashes. Later, one of Sagar's descendents, king Bhagirathi did severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to bring down the holy river Ganges from the heaven so that his dead ancestors' souls could find liberation and deliverance from the curse. This is the story how Ganges descended to earth from heaven.]

Verse no. 4:

कोऽपि धारयिता वेगं पतन्त्या मे महीतले ।

अन्यथा भूतलं भित्त्वा नृप यास्ये रसातलम् ॥ ४ ॥

ko'pi dhārayitā vegaṁ patantyā me mahītale /

anyathā bhūtaṁ bhittvā nṛpa yāsyē rasātalam //4//

4- The deity representing Mother Ganges replied to Bhagirath: "Oh King! I will grant you your wish, but there is a practical problem. When I descend from heaven to the surface of earth, my currents will have a tremendous force which poses risk to the earth and all its life because the earth might crack and sink by the sheer impact of my powerful currents that would slam the earth like a gigantic battering ram. Tell me, who would sustain that force; who would act as a buffer between my descending currents and the earth so as to cushion the forceful blow of my currents? I warn you that if a solution to this is not found before hand, then my currents would pierce through the earth like a gigantic knife and go immediately to the Rasatal (Rasātala), i.e. the subterranean world which is also known as the Patal Loka (Pātāla), the nether world on the other side of the earth's surface.

{Mother Ganges warned king Bhagirath that if he does not make proper arrangements to receive the flow of the river as it descends with a mighty roar from heaven to the earth, then the force of its currents would split the earth's surface and bore right through to its other side to pour out once again into the vast receptacle of the universe on the other side, i.e. the nether world which is on the opposite side of the heaven. That would be a devastation for which Bhagirath will be held accountable, and it will be a very sinful act on his part because on the one hand his aim of delivering his forefathers would not be fulfilled, and on the other hand a wide swathe of life on the surface of the earth would be wiped out instantly. So therefore, he must first ensure that there is some way that can be found to act as a cushion to reduce the force of the descending currents of river Ganges before the river actually comes down from the heaven to earth.}

Verse no. 5:

किं चाहं न भुवं यास्ये नरा मय्यामृजन्त्यघम् ।
मृजामि तदघं क्वाहं राजंस्तत्र विचिन्त्यताम् ॥ ५ ॥

kiṁ cāhaṁ na bhuvaṁ yāsyē narā mayyāmṛjantyagham /
mrjāmi tadaghaṁ kvāhaṁ rājanstatra vicintyatām //5//

5- Oh King! There is one other reason why I do not want to go down to the mortal world. As soon as the news of my arrival spreads, along with the fact that by bathing in my holy waters one can get rid of one's accumulated sins, then people of all denominations and from all corners of the earth would come to my banks in their hundreds and thousands to take a bath in my waters in order to wash off the dirt of their sins and their accumulated consequences. This will obviously pollute the purity of my waters and undermine my holiness and sanctity.

Say, how would I overcome this problem; I cannot bar anyone from coming and taking a dip in my water, but the dirt that these people would wash and leave behind with me, how am I to get over it, how am I to neutralise it, and what am I to do in order to retain my sanctity, holiness and purity? So therefore, you must very carefully consider this point also, because I am anxious about it."

Verse no. 6:

श्रीभगीरथ उवाच

साधवो न्यासिनः शान्ता ब्रह्मिष्ठा लोकपावनाः ।

हरन्त्यघं तेऽङ्गसङ्गात् तेष्वस्ते ह्यघभिद्धरिः ॥ ६ ॥

śrī-bhagīratha uvāca

sādhavo nyāsinaḥ śāntā brahmiṣṭhā loka-pāvanāḥ /

harantyaḡhaṁte'ṅga-saṅgāt teṣvāste hyaḡha-bhiddhariḥ //6//

6- King Bhagirath replied: "Oh Mother Ganges! There is no reason why you should worry on this count. It is because like the sinful persons, countless wise, enlightened, self-realised, god-fearing, pious, saintly and holy people would also come to take a bath in your waters. These people would have spent their lives in doing good deeds, observing austerities and penances, following a regulated life as ordained by the scriptures such as the Vedas, worshipping the Supreme Lord and offering obeisance to him, leading a life of renunciation and dispassion towards all material things of this world, and in a general way, therefore, considered holy and pure themselves.

So when such holy, pious and noble people take a dip in your waters which would have become polluted by those people who are sinful, then the negative energy left behind by the latter would be neutralised by the positive energy left behind by the former. And in this way, with the positive counteracting the negative, you will be able to retain your neutrality without having to bear the burden of the dirt washed off by sinful persons as you fear at present.

{Besides this, you are so holy, pure, immaculate and glorious that nothing can pollute you in the first place, just like the case of the sun which no power in the world can cause to be tainted, because the sun is a receptacle of a fiercely burning fire, and any filth put in it would be burnt to ashes in an instant. Pollution occurs when the water is static, as in ponds and pools and puddles or even in large lakes, and not when the water is constantly flowing with swift currents because it ensures that all filth and dirt are carried away quickly, every moment of the time that passes, to maintain cleanliness. Its as simple as that.}

Verse no. 7:

धारयिष्यति ते वेगं रुद्रस्त्वात्मा शरीरिणाम् ।

यस्मिन्नोतमिदं प्रोतं विश्वं शाटीव तन्तुषु ॥ ७ ॥

dhārayiṣyati te vegaṁ rudrastvātmā śarīriṇām /

yasminnotamidam protaṁ viśvaṁ śāṭīva tantuṣu //7//

7- Just like a thread is an integral part and the basic component of any cloth of any design, texture and length, so is the case of this vast and varied universe which has the same invisible entity that gives it its shape, sustains it, enables all life forms to thrive in it, and controls its different aspects and working. This underlying and invisible entity is the Supreme Consciousness that assumes different roles depending upon the need and the necessity of the occasion.

This Supreme Consciousness is called the Supreme Being, and Lord Shiva is a manifestation of it. Lord Shiva embodies all the powers and abilities of the Supreme Being in his form, and this is why he is called 'Mahadeva', the Great God.

So therefore, Lord Shiva is absolutely competent to bear the weight of your currents when you descend on earth, simply because you and your weight are not heavier than Lord Shiva as he is the Supreme Lord who has created you along with all other entities in existence in his form as Brahma, the Creator."

[Note--It is the thread that actually decides how strong the cloth is, and how much weight the cloth can bear. If the thread is weak, the cloth would tear apart when something having a weight more than the bearing capacity of the thread is put on it, while a strong thread would ensure that the cloth can bear even a heavy weight. So likewise, Lord Shiva is fully able to bear the weight and not get crushed under the powerful currents as river Ganges cascades down from heaven to earth.]

Verse no. 8:

**इत्युक्त्वा स नृपो देवं तपसातोषयच्छिवम् ।
कालेनाल्पीयसा राजस्तस्येशश्चाश्वतुष्यत ॥ ८ ॥**

ityuktvā sa nrpo devaṁ tapasātoṣayacchivam /
kālenālpīyasā rājamstasyeśāś-cāśvatuṣyata //8//

8- Sage Shukdeo said: "Oh king Parikshit! After assuring the deity of river Ganges in the aforesaid manner, king Bhagirath did severe penance to please Lord Shiva. The Lord is very easy to be satisfied¹, and so with Bhagirath too he was soon satisfied with the latter's penances.

[Note--¹Lord Shiva is also called 'Ashutosh' (Āśutoṣa)--i.e. one who is easily satisfied.]

Verse no. 9:

**तथेति राज्ञाभिहितं सर्वलोकहितः शिवः ।
दधारावहितो गङ्गां पादपूतजलां हरेः ॥ ९ ॥**

tatheti rājñābhihitaṁ sarva-loka-hitāḥ śivaḥ /
dadhārāvahito gangāṁ pāda-pūta-jalāṁ hareḥ //9//

9- When Lord Shiva appeared before king Bhagirath and asked him to seek what he wished, the king requested the Lord to help cushion the force of the currents of river Ganges as it descends from heaven on earth. Lord Shiva immediately accepted this proposal because the arrival of the holy river Ganges would be for the general good of the people of the world in the future (sarva-loka-hitāḥ). So Lord Shiva said: "It is granted, let it be so."

Then Lord Shiva sat erect in a meditative posture and carefully wrapped up the entire stream of the descending river Ganges in the thick coil of the matted hairs on his head. Lord Shiva was very happy in doing so and thought it as an honour--because river Ganges has its origin in the toes of Lord Vishnu, the second of the Trinity Gods and the Lord who takes care of the well-being of this creation.

[Note--A king who looks after the welfare of his subjects and stands by them in the hour of their need is always respected and treated with great honour by everyone. From the perspective of creation, Lord Vishnu plays this role. Lord Brahma created the world, but the responsibility of taking care of his creation fell on Lord Vishnu. Meanwhile, Lord Shiva became an ascetic, renouncing all attachments to material world. Spreading knowledge like Brahma did by way of creating the Vedas, and teaching renunciation by way of example as done by Lord Shiva, left Lord Vishnu the only Lord out of the three manifestations of the Supreme Being, known as the Trinity Gods, to take care of this creation. Hence, both Brahma and Shiva held Vishnu in high esteem.

Since Ganges originated from Lord Vishnu's toes, Lord Shiva decided that it is a great fortune for him to bear this holy and purifying river on his head as a mark of his respect to Lord Vishnu. So therefore, he was in a way thankful to king Bhagirath to make this happen.]

Verse no. 10:

**भगीरथः स राजर्षिर्नित्ये भुवनपावनीम् ।
यत्र स्वपितृणां देहा भस्मीभूताः स्म शेरते ॥ १० ॥**

bhagīrathaḥ sa rājarṣirnitṛye bhuvana-pāvanīm /
yatra sva-pitṛṇāṁ dehā bhasmībhūtāḥ sma śerate //10//

10- The great and saintly king Bhagirath brought river Ganges, which has the power to deliver a person from this mortal world and help his soul to attain heaven, to the place where the bodies of his ancestors lay in ashes after they were burnt by the curse of a sage (Kapil).

[Note--Though it is not expressly mentioned anywhere in these verses, but river Ganges first opened its streams at a place called Gangotri in the higher reaches of the Himalayas. From there it followed king Bhagirath and reached the plains at Haridwar, and then proceeded behind him to finally reach sage Kapil's hermitage situated on an island in the east coast of the Indian sub-continent in the Bay of Bengal where the ashes of the king's ancestors lay in ashes. After bathing them in its purifying water, the river finally entered the ocean.

How did king Bhagirath proceeded to take the swiftly flowing stream of river Ganges to the far away place where the bodies of his forefathers lay in ashes? He rode on a fast chariot and the Ganges followed from behind. This is clearly mentioned in the next verse.]

Verse no. 11:

**रथेन वायुवेगेन प्रयान्तमनुधावती ।
देशान्पुनन्ती निर्दग्धानासिञ्चत्सगरात्मजान् ॥ ११ ॥**

rathena vāyu-vegena prayāntamanudhāvātī /
deśānpunantī nirdagdhānāsiñcatsagarātmajān //11//

11- King Bhagirath mounted a swift chariot and rode through the length of the land, with river Ganges following him from behind¹. He finally reached the place where the ashes of his ancestors lay². There, Bhagirath bathed the ashes by sprinkling them with water of river Ganges.

[Note--¹In this way, king Bhagirath acted as a provider of liberation and deliverance to countless people living in countless hamlets and towns and villages through which his chariot passed with the rarest of rare opportunity to access the waters of the heavenly river Ganges either at their own native places or at nearby places. In a way, the king acted as a prophet or a messiah who brings salvation and emancipation to one and all. His efforts also purified the land, and helped establish a number of pilgrimage centres along the banks of river Ganges that exist till this day.

It's quite probable that king Bhagirath had some kind of an implement, such as a farming harrow, attached to his chariot, as well as specially designed wheels of the chariot that would dig a deep furrow or trench in the ground, and automatically heap the dug-out soil on the two outer sides of this trench, paving a way for river Ganges to flow through it. His chariot must have moved very fast so that it could keep pace with the flow of the current of the river.

²They were the 60,000 sons of king Sagar who had been cursed by sage Kapil when they had gone to search the sacrificial horse which was stolen by Indra and tied at the sage's hermitage. These sons thought that it was sage Kapil who had stolen the horse, so they vented their ire on the sage and ransacked his hermitage. The sage became furious and cursed them to be reduced to ashes.]

Verse no. 12:

यज्जलस्पर्शमात्रेण ब्रह्मदण्डहता अपि ।

सगरात्मजा दिवं जग्मुः केवलं देहभस्मभिः ॥ १२ ॥

yaj-jala-sparśa-mātreṇa brahma-daṇḍa-hatā api /
sagarātmajā divaṁ jagmuḥ kevalaṁ deha-bhasmabhiḥ //12//

12- Since the sons of king Sagar had offended a great sage (Kapil), all of them were burnt by the fire of his curse. But when the holy water of river Ganges was sprayed or sprinkled on the ashes of their burnt bodies, they were exonerated of their sins of offending an innocent sage, and thus became eligible to find deliverance from their curse and go to heaven.

Verse no. 13:

भस्मीभूताङ्गसङ्गेन स्वर्याताः सगरात्मजाः ।

किं पुनः श्रद्धया देवीं सेवन्ते ये धृतव्रताः ॥ १३ ॥

bhasmībhūtāṅga-saṅgena svaryātāḥ sagarātmajāḥ /
kiṁ punaḥ śraddhayā devīṁ sevante ye dhṛta-vratāḥ //13//

Say, if the sons of king Sagar lying in the form of ashes for a long time could find liberation from the effects of their sins and get deliverance because of the effort made by another person (in this case king Bhagirath) who had merely sprayed or sprinkled the holy water of river Ganges on the ashes, then just think how much more benefit would accrue to someone who faithfully worships the deity of the holy river Ganges personally and bathes in its purifying water with a sincere prayer to find liberation and deliverance from this mortal world of transmigration! {Truly, the benefits are undoubtedly many times more.}

Verse no. 14:

**न ह्येतत् परमाश्चर्यं स्वर्धुन्या यदिहोदितम् ।
अनन्तचरणाम्भोजप्रसूताया भवच्छिदः ॥ १४ ॥**

na hyetat param-āścaryam svardhunā yadihoditam /
ananta-caraṇāmbhoja-prasūtāyā bhava-cchidaḥ //14//

14- Since the holy river Ganges has its origin in the toe of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, she has an innate ability to bless the devotee with the boon of liberation and deliverance from the bondage of transmigration in this mortal world. Hence, there is no wonder in whatever glory of hers is narrated in these verses.

[Note--Because river Ganges emanates from the feet of the Supreme Being, which means the river has already washed the holy feet of the Lord, and had therefore become consecrated with the virtues of holiness and divinity before proceeding forward, it follows that the river carries all the potential spiritual rewards that comes by actually touching the holy feet of the Supreme Lord. Thus, if a person faithfully takes a bath in the water of river Ganges and offers obeisance to it, then it is obviously equivalent to bathing in a consecrated water that has been sanctified by the touch of the Supreme Lord's holy feet.

Since it is not practically possible for an ordinary person to touch the holy feet of the Supreme Lord himself, then the same spiritual benefits can accrue to the person if he worships river Ganges, bathes in its water, and uses it to purify himself and wash the negative effects of his past bad deeds with the understanding that the water of this river is consecrated and sanctified as it emerged from the toe of Lord Vishnu. But there is a common-sense caveat--and it is that the person takes a vow not to repeat his mistakes again, for otherwise it will be a futile activity. Simply taking a dip in river Ganges in a routine and mechanical way by way of one's daily chore, just as one takes a daily bath in a nearby ordinary river or even in the bathroom of his home, without understanding the significance and holiness of river Ganges, then it will serve no purpose.]

Verse no. 15:

**सन्निवेश्य मनो यस्मिञ्छ्रद्धया मुनयोऽमलाः ।
त्रैगुण्यं दुस्त्यजं हित्वा सद्यो यातास्तदात्मताम् ॥ १५ ॥**

sanniveśya mano yasmiñ-*chraddhayā munayo'malāḥ* /
traiguṇyaṁ dustyajam hitvā sadyo yātāstadātmatām //15//

15- Great sages (who reside on the banks of this holy river Ganges) renounce all attachments to this material world, devote their mind in service of the Supreme Being, do meditation and contemplate on the supreme Self, rise above the gross aspects of their physical mortal body and attain a transcendental state of being--such self-realised, enlightened, wise and erudite sages understand the significance of river Ganges, and thus they become eligible to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Verse nos. 16-17:

श्रुतो भगीरथाज्जज्ञे तस्य नाभोऽपरोऽभवत् ।
सिन्धुद्वीपस्ततस्तस्मादयुतायुस्ततोऽभवत् ॥ १६ ॥
ऋतूपर्णो नलसखो योऽश्वविद्यामयान्नलात् ।
दत्त्वाक्षहृदयं चास्मै सर्वकामस्तु तत्सुतम् ॥ १७ ॥

śruto bhagīrathājajñe tasya nābho'paro'bhavat /
sindhudvīpastatas-tasmāda-yutāyus-tato'bhavat //16//
ṛtūparṇo nala-sakho yo'sva-vidyāmayānnalāt /
dattvākṣa-hṛdayaṁ cāsmāi sarvakāmastu tat-sutam //17//

16-17 - King Bhagirath had a son named Shruta (Śruta), and the latter's son was called Nabha (Nābha). {This Nabha is different from his namesake born earlier in the Ikshwaku dynasty.}

Nabha had a son named Sindghudvipa (Sindhudvīpa), and latter's son was called Ayutaya (Ayutāyu). From Ayutaya came Rituparna (Rtūparṇa).

Rituparna was a friend of Nalaraja (Nalarāja). Rituparna taught his friend Nalaraja the art of gambling, while the latter taught the former the art of maintaining and controlling horses, known as Ashwa Vidya (horse-knowledge).

The son of Rituparna was Sarvakaam (Sarvakāma).

Verse no. 18:

ततः सुदासस्तत्पुत्रो दमयन्तीपतिर्नृपः ।
आहुर्मित्रसहं यं वै कल्माषाङ्घ्रिमुत क्वचित् ।
वसिष्ठशापाद् रक्षोऽभूदनपत्यः स्वकर्मणा ॥ १८ ॥

tataḥ sudāsastat-putro damayantī-patirnrpaḥ /
āhurmitrasahaṁ yaṁ vai kalmāṣāṅghrimuta kvacit /
vasiṣṭha-śāpād rakṣo'bhūdanapatyaḥ sva-karmaṇā //18//

18- Sarvakaam had a son named Sudas (Sudāsa), who was also known as Mitrasaha or Kalmaa-shapaada (Kalmāṣapāda). Sudas' had a wife called Damyanti (Damayantī).

Because of his unintended misdeed, Sudas was cursed by sage Vashistha ('Vasiṣṭha'; the priest and advisor of the Ikshwaku line of kings of Ayodhya) to become a man-eating demon-like person, i.e. a cannibal or a Rakshash (Rākṣasa)¹.

[Note--¹The story of why Vashistha cursed Sudas to become a man-eater or a cannibal is narrated in the verses that follow herein below.]

Verse no. 19:

श्रीराजोवाच

किं निमित्तो गुरोः शापः सौदासस्य महात्मनः ।

एतद् वेदितुमिच्छामः कथ्यतां न रहो यदि ॥ १९ ॥

śrī-rājovāca

kiṁ nimitto guroḥ śāpaḥ saudāsasya mahātmanah /
etad veditum icchāmaḥ kathyatām na raho yadi //19//

19- King Parikshit (to whom sage Shukdeo was narrating the story of Lord Ram and his ancestors) said: "Oh sage Shukdeo! It is quite amazing for me to hear that sage Vashistha, who was a guru and the chief priest of the Ikshwaku dynasty in which Sudas was born, would curse his own patron, Sudas, who was a great and noble king. Please tell me, if the matter is not confidential, why did Vashistha curse king Sudas?"

Verse nos. 20-21:

श्रीशुक उवाच

सौदासो मृगयां किञ्चिच्चरन् रक्षो जघान ह ।

मुमोच भ्रातरं सोऽथ गतः प्रतिचिकीर्षया ॥ २० ॥

सञ्चिन्तयन्नघं राज्ञः सूदरूपधरो गृहे ।

गुरवे भोक्तुकामाय पक्त्वा निन्ये नरामिषम् ॥ २१ ॥

śrī-śuka uvāca

saudāso mṛgayām kiñciccaran rakṣo jaghāna ha /
mumoca bhrātaraṁ so'tha gataḥ praticikīrṣayā //20//
sañcintayannaghaṁ rājñāḥ sūda-rūpa-dharo gr̥he /
gurave bhoktu-kāmāya paktvā ninye narāmiṣam //21//

20-21- Sage Shukdeo replied: "Once Sudas went to live for some time in the forest to hunt. There, he killed a cannibalistic person, who was like a demon as he ate human flesh. But the kind king Sudas excused the man-eater's brother from punishment. This brother decided to take revenge. He somehow managed to enter the royal household disguised as an expert cook.

One day, king Sudas invited his chief priest sage Vashistha for dinner. The cannibal's brother, who had by now become a cook in the kitchen of Sudas, saw this as an opportunity to settle scores with Sudas who had killed his brother. So therefore, this cook served meals laced with human flesh to sage Vashistha¹.

[Note--¹According to other ancient texts such as the Mahabharat and some Purans, this story is told in other ways. Some of them are as follows:

(1) In Adi Parva of Mahabharat, the story is told that once Kalmashpada went to forest for hunting. There he had a confrontation with Shakti, the eldest of the 100 sons of sage Vashistha. When the proud king refused to give a passage to Shakti, the latter cursed him to become a cannibal.

(2) Another version of the story is as follows: Once Sudas offered food to sage Vashistha that contained human flesh because Sudas was under the influence of another sage Vishwamitra, who was Vashistha's fierce rival and wanted to make him fallen.

The rivalry between Vashistha and Vishwamitra was deep seated. Once king Sudas invited sage Vashistha, his royal priest, for a grand feast. Vishwamitra, meanwhile, prevailed upon a demon to disguise himself as a cook and enter the royal kitchen. This demon prepared a special dish tainted with human flesh, and told the otherwise innocent king that it was a unique and special dish that he has specially prepared for his most honoured guest, sage Vashistha. When the food was served, the sage realised by his mystical powers that it was laced with human flesh, and in a fit of rage he cursed the king to become a man-eating demon for twelve years.

The king had always lead a pious life, so he too possessed spiritual powers. Since he was innocent in himself, he took a cupful of water to curse Vashistha as a revenge, but his queen Damyanti stopped him.

Since the king had already invoked the water with a curse, and since his wife stalled him from throwing this cursed water on Vashistha, and also because he could not throw it on the ground as that would be tantamount to casting the curse of mother earth, the frustrated king threw the water on his own feet. This is why he was called 'Kalmāṣapāda', i.e. one with spotted feet.

When Vashistha came to realise that the king himself was innocent and the incident was the result of a deception played by his rival sage Vishwamitra, he (Vashistha) reduced the curse from a lifetime to merely twelve years. The sage also granted him a boon that after twelve years, the king would not remember this sad event of his life.

When Vishwamitra came to know that his evil design had failed, he became frustrated with Sudas and wanted to take revenge on him. He manipulated Sudas to become very horrific so much so that in the guise of taking revenge upon Vashistha for cursing him, the cannibalistic king killed and devoured Vashistha's own sons, including his eldest son Shakti.

Later on, as we shall read in the verses that follow herein below, the cannibal Sudas would eat a Brahmin, and his wife would curse him that if he approaches his own wife any time in his life, he would die instantly. So therefore, a danger arose that this dynasty would come to an end. But the wheel of creation goes on turning inspite of the most impossible circumstances and situations that it faces. When sage Vashistha came to know that he was directly or indirectly responsible for the end of the dynasty of which he was a chief priest, and as such it was his moral responsibility and duty to protect it, he arranged things in a way that though Sudas could not get a son personally by his wife because of the curse of the Brahmin's partner, still his wife became pregnant and begot a son who was very good. Though ancient texts do not specifically mention how this was made possible, yet in our modern world we know

of medical ways whereby artificial insemination is possible, and even test-tube babies can be born in a laboratory.

A similar story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153-to Doha no. 176. This story pertains to how an illustrious king named Pratapbhanu had become the demon Ravana due to a similar set of events where rivalry and jealousy played the driving role to turn a noble king into a cannibal, as was the case with king Sudas in the present case.]

Verse no. 22:

परिवेक्ष्यमाणं भगवान् विलोक्याभक्ष्यमञ्जसा ।

राजानमशपत् क्रुद्धो रक्षो ह्येवं भविष्यसि ॥ २२ ॥

parivekṣyamāṇaṁ bhagavān vilokyābhakṣyamāñjasā /
rājānamaśapat kruddho rakṣo hyevaṁ bhaviṣyasi //22//

22- When sage Vashistha was served this food contaminated with human flesh, he became aware of it by the virtue of his mystical powers, that this food is not fit for consumption. This obviously infuriated the sage who cursed king Sudas to become a man-eating cannibal.

Verse nos. 23-24:

रक्षःकृतं तद् विदित्वा चक्रे द्वादशवार्षिकम् ।

सोऽप्यपोऽञ्जलिमादाय गुरुं शप्तुं समुद्यतः ॥ २३ ॥

वारितो मदयन्त्यापो रुशतीः पादयोर्जहौ ।

दिशः खमवनीं सर्वं पश्यञ्जीवमयं नृपः ॥ २४ ॥

rakṣaḥ-kṛtaṁ tad veditvā cakre dvādaśa-vārṣikam /
so'pyapo-ñjalimādāya gurum śaptum samudyataḥ //23//
vārito madayantyāpo ruśatīḥ pādayorjahau /
diśaḥ khamavanīm sarvaṁ paśyañjīvamayaṁ nṛpaḥ //24//

23-24 - When sage Vashistha came to realise that the contaminated food was not served by king Sudas willingly himself, but he was deceived by a demon who had entered his kitchen as a cook to take revenge on the king for killing his brother in the forest (refer: verse nos. 20-21), the sage relented, and he reduced the duration of the curse from a lifetime to merely twelve years. {The sage further told king Sudas that after twelve years he won't remember anything about these twelve years of his life so that the rest of his life would be spent in an ordinary way.}

Meanwhile, the innocent king too became angry at sage Vashistha for misusing his mystical powers to cast a curse upon him without verifying the fact of the case. Since king Sudas himself was a righteous and noble king who observed all the laws diligently, he too had accumulated spiritual merit, and in a fit of rage he took some consecrated water in his cupped palms to counter-curse sage Vashistha (to take revenge for ruining his life). But at that moment his queen, Madyanti, intervened and asked him to stop, as it would be another big sin to curse a sage of Vashistha's stature

after the one already done by serving meat to him, which would be very calamitous for the whole family.

Then the question arose as to where this water, that had already been infused with a vicious curse, should be disposed of--because when the king closed his eyes to locate a place for disposal of this cursed water, he found that all the ten directions of the world were full of living beings who were innocent of any crime, and they hadn't committed any sort of offence to him either, so they could not be punished by throwing this cursed water on them.

Verse no. 25:

राक्षसं भावमापन्नः पादे कल्माषतां गतः ।

व्यवायकाले ददृशे वनौकोदम्पती दिवजौ ॥ २५ ॥

rākṣasaṁ bhāvamāpannaḥ pāde kalmāṣatām gataḥ /
vyavāyakāle dadṛśe vanaukodampatī divjau //25//

25- Finding no other place to put the cursed water, Sudas threw it on his own feet, which became burnt and spotted with dark clots of blood. This is why Sudas also came to be known as Kalmaashpada (Kalmāṣapāda)--i.e. one with cursed feet with black spots.

One day, Kalmaashpada had been wandering in the forest looking for a human prey when he saw a Brahmin couple engaged in sexual intercourse.

Verse nos. 26-27:

क्षुधार्तो जगृहे विप्रं तत्पत्न्याहाकृतार्थवत् ।

न भवान् राक्षसः साक्षादिक्ष्वाकूणां महारथः ॥ २६ ॥

मदयन्त्याः पतिर्वीर नाधर्मं कर्तुमर्हसि ।

देहि मेऽपत्यकामाया अकृतार्थं पतिं दिवजम् ॥ २७ ॥

kṣudhārto jagṛhe vipraṁ tat-patny āhākr̥tārthavat /
na bhavān rākṣasaḥ sākṣād ikṣvākūṇām mahā-rathaḥ //26//
madayantyāḥ patir vīra nādharmam kartum arhasi /
dehi me'patya-kāmāyā akṛtārtham patim divjam //27//

26-27- Since Sudas, now rechristened as Kalmaashpada (Kalmāṣapāda), was under the influence of sage Vashistha's curse and had become a cannibal, and also because he was very hungry at the moment, he wanted to devour the male Brahmin. So he grabbed the Brahmin man to devour him to satisfy his hunger. The distressed wife of the Brahmin pleaded with the cannibalistic king: "Oh King! Don't you realise that you belong to the great and illustrious family of the ancient king Ikshwaku of Ayodhya.

You are not primarily a man-eater, but of a noble descendant of that dynasty. You are an honourable warrior and a husband of queen Madyanti. You ought not act in an improper way. I desire to have a son by my husband. He is about to impregnate me, and you have snatched him midway. Therefore, I beseech you to let him off till he impregnates me with his essence so that I can become pregnant and beget his child.

Verse no. 28:

देहोऽयं मानुषो राजन् पुरुषस्याखिलार्थदः ।
तस्मादस्य वधो वीर सर्वार्थवध उच्यते ॥ २८ ॥

deho'yaṁ mānuṣo rājan puruṣasyākhilārthadaḥ /
tasmād asya vadho vīra sarvārtha-vadha ucyate //28//

28- Oh King! You are a hero. The human body has a life-span, and the Creator has devised a plan by which the human race self-perpetuates by means of reproducing its own kind by the process of sexual intercourse between a husband and his wife. No one has the right to interfere with this law of creation mandated by the Creator himself. If you kill my husband untimely, you will be killing a generation that would come in the future from his essence that he wants to inject in me now so that I can act as a crucible for creating a generation of his off-springs. Beware, oh king, it would be a horrendous sin on your part if you don't heed my advice.

Verse no. 29:

एष हि ब्राह्मणो विद्वांस्तपःशीलगुणान्वितः ।
आरिराधयिषुर्ब्रह्म महापुरुषसंज्ञितम् ।
सर्वभूतात्मभावेन भूतेष्वन्तर्हितं गुणैः ॥ २९ ॥

eṣa hi brāhmaṇo vidvāmstapaḥ-śīla-guṇānvitaḥ /
ārirādhayīṣurbrahma mahā-puruṣa-saṁjñitam /
sarva-bhūtātma-bhāvena bhūteṣvantarhitam guṇaiḥ //29//

29- My husband is a peaceful and a highly learned Brahmin. He is engaged in observing austerities and is always eager to worship the Supreme Lord who resides within the heart of all living entities. {To wit, my husband is a wise and religious person who has reached a higher level of realisation when one understands the Supreme Soul resides in all living beings in the form of their individual souls.}

[Note--The wife of the victim means to tell the attacker that her husband is not an ordinary Brahmin just because he is born as a Brahmin, but on the contrary he is learned, god-worshipping, peaceful and a religious person like a true Brahmin should be. He does austerities, studies the scriptures, and lives a righteous way of life. So if the king kills him, then his already great sin by which he had become a cannibal in the first place would be worsened further, and it would only lead to his own ruin and eliminate any chance that may still be there for his redemption.

The qualities of a true Brahmin are mentioned in Bhagwat Geeta, chapter no. 18, verse no. 42 as follows: Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, knowledge, and religiousness.]

Verse no. 30:

सोऽयं ब्रह्मर्षिवर्यस्ते राजर्षिप्रवराद् विभो ।
कथमर्हति धर्मज्ञ वधं पितुरिवात्मजः ॥ ३० ॥

so'yaṁ brahmarṣi-varyas te rājarṣi-pravarād vibho /
katham arhati dharma-jña vadhaṁ pitur ivātmajaḥ //30//

30- My lord, since you had been a wise and sagely king (rājarṣi) before the curse had corrupted your wisdom and mind, you must be aware of religious principles. For a king, his subjects are like his son, and therefore they deserve the king's protection, mercy, consideration and compassion. Like a son does not deserve being killed by his own father, so likewise this Brahmin, being your subject, does not deserve to be killed by you; rather he expects protection from you. Say, oh great king, how can you then ever think of killing an honest Brahmin for no fault of his at all?

Verse no. 31:

तस्य साधोरपापस्य भ्रूणस्य ब्रह्मवादिनः ।
कथं वधं यथा बभ्रूर्मन्यते सन्मतो भवान् ॥ ३१ ॥

tasya sādhor apāpasya bhrūṇasya brahma-vādinaḥ /
kathaṁ vadhaṁ yathā babhror manyate san-mato bhavān //31//

31- You have been well known and honoured in circle of wise and learned people. Then say, how can you dare to kill an innocent Brahmin who is a saintly person, peaceful, learned, well-versed in the knowledge of the Vedas and other scriptures? Killing him prematurely would be tantamount to killing a cow or destroying an embryo (which represents a living entity) in a mother's womb--both of which are unpardonable and horrible sins.

Verse no. 32:

यद्ययं क्रियते भक्ष्यस्तर्हि मां खाद पूर्वतः ।
न जीविष्ये विना येन क्षणं च मृतकं यथा ॥ ३२ ॥

yady ayaṁ kriyate bhakṣyas tarhi mām khāda pūrvataḥ /
na jīviṣye vinā yena kṣaṇaṁ ca mṛtakaṁ yathā //32//

32- I cannot live even for a moment without my husband. If you want to devour my husband, it would be better to eat me first, because without my husband I am as good as a dead body."

Verse no. 33:

एवं करुणभाषिण्या विलपन्त्या अनाथवत् ।
व्याघ्रः पशुमिवाखादत् सौदासः शापमोहितः ॥ ३३ ॥

evam karuṇa-bhāṣiṇyā vilapantyā anāthavat /
vyāghraḥ paśumivākhādat saudāsaḥ śāpa-mohitaḥ //33//

33- Being intoxicated and deluded by the poison of sage Vashistha's curse upon him, king Sudas didn't listen to the pitiable pleading of the Brahmin's wife to show mercy on her husband. The cannibal king turned a deaf ear to her lamentations and devoured the Brahmin in front of his wife just like a tiger devours its prey.

[Note--The sight was most horrifying and repulsive. The cannibalistic man-eating king grabbed the male Brahmin and dug his teeth into his heart and chest. He dashed the Brahmin flat on the ground on his back even as the latter writhed in pain, bled profusely and screamed. Then the cannibal mounted on the Brahmin's body just like a tiger mounts on his victim. He tore apart the body, pulled out its entrails, licked up blood, chewed through the flesh and bones, and soon left the Brahmin's body in tatters, in a rotting mass of leftover flesh, bones, veins and intestines.]

Verse no. 34:

ब्राह्मणी वीक्ष्य दिधिषुं पुरुषादेन भक्षितम् ।
शोचन्त्यात्मानमुर्वीशमशपत् कुपिता सती ॥ ३४ ॥

brāhmaṇī vīkṣya didhiṣuṁ puruṣādena bhakṣitam /
śocanty ātmānam urvīśam aśapat kupitā satī //34//

34- When the chaste wife of the Brahmin, who was about to discharge his semen into her womb, was thus eaten mercilessly by the man-eating king, she was overwhelmed with grief and anger. So therefore, she cursed the king vehemently as follows--

Verse no. 35:

यस्मान्मे भक्षितः पाप कामार्तायाः पतिस्त्वया ।
तवापि मृत्युराधानादकृतप्रजं दर्शितः ॥ ३५ ॥

yasmānme bhakṣitaḥ pāpa kāmārtāyāḥ patistvayā /
tavāpi mṛtyu-rādhānādakṛta-prajña darśitaḥ //35//

35- The distraught and lamenting wife of the Brahmin cursed the cannibalistic king wrathfully: "Oh you wicked, merciless, sinful and foolish wretch! Since you have eaten my husband when I was desirous of having his seed in my womb so that I can bear his child, so shall it be with you too. I curse you that you will die when you attempt to discharge your seed (semen) into your wife. That is to say, whenever you attempt to have sexual intercourse with your wife, you will die instantly."

Verse no. 36:

एवं मित्रसहं शप्त्वा पतिलोकपरायणा ।
तदस्थीनि समिद्धेऽग्नौ प्रास्य भर्तुर्गतिं गता ॥ ३६ ॥

evam mitrasahamśaptvā pati-loka-parāyaṇā /
tad-asthīni samiddhe'gnau prāsya bhartur gatiṁ gatā //36//

36- In this way, king Sudas (now known as Kalmaashpada; Kalmāṣapāda) was cursed by the wife of the innocent Brahmin whom the king had killed and devoured.

The wife had no desire to live without her husband, so she lit a funeral fire for her husband and leapt into the blazing fire to burn herself along with the mortal remains of her dead husband. The couple went to the same destination to uphold their vows that they won't live separately.

Verse no. 37:

विशापो द्वादशाब्दान्ते मैथुनाय समुद्यतः ।
विज्ञाप्य ब्राह्मणीशापं महिष्या स निवारितः ॥ ३७ ॥

viśāpo dvādaśābdānte maithunāya samudyataḥ /
vijñāpya brāhmaṇī-śāpaṁ mahiṣyā sa nivāritaḥ //37//

37- After twelve years had passed, the curse cast by sage Vashistha on king Sudas came to an end. So the king reverted to his former self as a righteous king who looked after his subjects well.

But, the king had forgotten everything that happened during the course of those twelve years (refer: verse nos. 23-24). He had also forgotten about the curse of the wife of the Brahmin he had killed and devoured (refer: verse no. 35).

So, when he returned to normal life and wished to have a sexual union with his wife Madyanti, she reminded him of the curse of the Brahmin's wife, and checked him from proceeding further with his passions and desire for sensual gratification.

Verse no. 38:

अत ऊर्ध्वं स तत्याज स्त्रीसुखं कर्मणाप्रजाः ।
वसिष्ठस्तदनुज्ञातो मदयन्त्यां प्रजामधात् ॥ ३८ ॥

ata ūrdhvaṁ sa tatyāja strī-sukhaṁ karmaṇāprajāḥ /
vasiṣṭha-stadanu-jñāto madayantyāṁ prajāmadhāt //38//

38- After his queen Madyanti warned Sudas of the gravity of the situation, he gave up all hopes of any sexual interaction with his wife, and thereby surrendered to the will of his destiny that he would remain childless. But unfortunately that would also mean the end of the dynasty because there would be no heir to the throne after Sudas died.

When king Sudas lamented and pleaded with sage Vashistha to do something so that the family line continues, the sage advised him that if a means could be found whereby his queen Madyanti could bear a child (a son), then this unfortunate situation could be taken care of.

So, with no other choice left before him, the king gave permission to sage Vashistha to find a way to impregnate his wife Madyanti so that a child could be got from her womb¹.

[Note--Though not clearly mentioned how sage Vashistha managed to make Madyanti bear a child, but it was surely by artificial insemination, which is a common practice in the medical field today. No wrong interpretation should be made here--that the child was of Vashistha! That would not only be incongruous and absurd, but even sacrilegious.

The female Brahmin had cursed king Sudas that he can't have sexual intercourse with his wife, but if a method could be employed whereby the semen of the king could be used to fertilise the egg in Madyanti's womb, then the curse would not be applicable as there would be no physical contact between him and his wife. The role of sage Vashistha was merely to arrange for this artificial insemination or IVF (in vitro fertilisation), which is a common practice in the modern world to help childless couples, and the sage must have summoned royal physicians and surgeons to do the needful.

We must not forget that even in that ancient time, knowledge of medicine and various related fields of medical science was well developed. Doctors were, however, called 'Vaidya'. Proof? When Laxman was wounded in the battle-field of Lanka, he was revived by a herb that Hanuman had brought from the far away northern Himalayas on the advise of a Vaidya named Sushen who was the chief 'doctor' or medicine man of Lanka. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 54; (ii) Doha no. 56; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

Another proof relates to the birth of Lord Ram and his brothers. King Dashrath did not have any son even though he had become very old and had three wives, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. At that time too, sage Vashistha had helped Dashrath beget four sons by organising a religious ritual in which a deity emerged from the fire-pit with a pitcher containing some sweet pudding, which surely must have been some kind of concoction of herbs and chemicals, and most probably also contained the king's frozen sperms, which was shared by the three queens, and soon they became pregnant. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189-to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 190.}

Verse no. 39:

सा वै सप्त समा गर्भमबिभ्रन्न व्यजायत ।

जघ्नेऽश्मनोदरं तस्याः सोऽश्मकस्तेन कथ्यते ॥ ३९ ॥

sā vai sapta samā garbham abibhran na vyajāyata /
jaghneśmanodaraṁ tasyāḥ sośmakas tena kathyate //39//

39- Madyanti bore a child that remained stuck in her womb for seven years (sapta samā garbham). It was a difficult and life-threatening situation, and so sage Vashistha used a stone to strike at her womb to make the embryo move, and thus the child (a son) was born. He was called Ashmak (Aśmaka)--meaning 'the child born by striking with a stone'.

Verse no. 40:

अश्मकाद्बालिको जज्ञे यः स्त्रीभिः परिरक्षितः ।

नारीकवच इत्युक्तो निःक्षत्रे मूलकोऽभवत् ॥ ४० ॥

aśmakādbāliko jajñe yaḥ strībhiḥ parirakṣitaḥ /
nārī-kavaca ityukto niḥkṣatre mūlako'bhavat //40//

40- Ashmak's son was known as Balika (Bālika). He was always surrounded by women. When sage Parashuram (Paraśurāma) had gone on a rampage, killing the members of the Kshatriya race, he also attacked Balika who also belonged to this race. But he was saved from the sage's wrath by the women who surrounded him on all sides like a shield. So therefore, Balika was given a nickname of 'Narikavach' (Nārīkavaca)--i.e. one who was protected by women who acted like a shield around him.

But in a way this became a boon because when sage Parashuram had decimated the entire Kshatriya race, Balika managed to escape his wrath and survived. Later on, at the intervention of sage Vashistha, Balika begot a son (as narrated in verse no. 41 herein below) who carried forward the line of the Kshatriya race. Otherwise, this race would have been extinguished forever.

Since Balika helped to carry forward the line of the Kshatriya race, he is also called 'Mulak' (Mūlaka)--i.e. the root from which the Kshatriya race emanated and expanded. {Balika became a progenitor of the Kshatriya race after all its members were killed by sage Parashuram.}

Verse no. 41:

ततो दशरथस्तस्मात् पुत्र ऐडविडिस्ततः ।

राजा विश्वसहो यस्य खट्वाङ्गश्चक्रवर्त्यभूत् ॥ ४१ ॥

tato daśarathastasmāt putra aiḍaviḍistataḥ /
rājā viśvasaho yasya khaṭvāṅgaścakravarty-abhūt //41//

41- Balika had a son named Dashrath (Daśaratha). {This 'Dashrath' was different from his later namesake who was the father of Lord Ram}.

Dashrath's son was called Aidvaide (Aiḍaviḍi), and the latter's son was king Vishvasaha (Viśvasaha).

The son of Vishvasaha was the famous king Khatvanga (Khaṭvāṅga).

Verse no. 42:

यो देवैरर्थितो दैत्यान्वधीद् युधि दुर्जयः ।

मुहूर्तमायुर्ज्ञात्वैत्य स्वपुरं सन्दधे मनः ॥ ४२ ॥

yo devairarthito daityānavadhīd yudhi durjayaḥ /
muhūrtamāyurjñātvaitya svapuram sandadhe manaḥ //42//

42- King Khatvanga was very brave and invincible. When the gods asked him to help them in their fight with the demons, he supported them and won. The gods were very

obliged and pleased with him, and wanted to grant him a boon. The king asked them how long his life was, and the gods told him that he had but a few more moments to live. King Khatvanga wasted no time and immediately went inside his palace to meditate upon the holy feet of the Supreme Lord.

[Note--It is to be noted here that Khatvanga had only a few moments left to attain emancipation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death to find eternal liberation, peace and salvation for his soul. So he decided to meditate and offer his services to the Supreme Being, and he did it with exceptional devotion, faith and integrity so much so that he attained his objective within that limited short span of time. The lesson to be learnt is that if Khatvanga can achieve this remarkable feat and accomplish his objectives in merely a fraction of time, then how much lucky we are that we have all the time at our disposal to do it at ease, yet we fritter away our lives in pursuit of a false world, and expect peace and happiness from a deluding mirage.]

Verse no. 43:

**न मे ब्रह्मकुलात् प्राणाः कुलदैवान्न चात्मजाः ।
न श्रियो न मही राज्यं न दाराश्चातिवल्लभाः ॥ ४३ ॥**

na me brahmakulāt prāṇāḥ kuladaivān na cātmajāḥ /
na śriyo na mahī rājyaṁ na dārāśchātivallabhāḥ //43//

43- King Khatvanga thought to himself: 'Nothing is dear to me than the Supreme Lord, not even my own life, nor my family, kingdom, land, wife, children, as well as the opulence and majesty of kingdom. Nothing charms me and attracts me more than devotion to Brahm, the Supreme Being, who is pure Consciousness and the almighty Lord of all.

Brahm is my family's revered deity, and when I and my family worshipped the Brahmins I did it because they represented Brahm, and for no other reason.

Verse no. 44:

**न बाल्येऽपि मतिर्मह्यमधर्मे रमते क्वचित् ।
नापश्यमुत्तमश्लोकादन्यत् किञ्चन वस्त्वहम् ॥ ४४ ॥**

na bālye'pi matirmahyamadharme ramate kvacit /
nāpaśyamuttamaślokāda-nyat kiñcana vastvaham //44//

44- Even in my childhood I was never attracted to worldly things and material charms. I never engaged in non-religious activities. I found nothing more important than Brahm, the Supreme Being.

{Since Brahm is all pervading supreme Consciousness, and everything in existence is nothing but Brahm, whenever I engaged with this world and its people, and even when I joined the gods in their war with the demons, I did it with this understanding that I am engaging with Brahm and serving him.}

[Note--From all the statements of Khatvanga, we come to the conclusion that he was an enlightened, learned and self-realised soul who was well-versed in the spiritual and metaphysical philosophy as envisioned in the Upanishads.]

Verse no. 45:

देवैः कामवरो दत्तो मह्यं त्रिभुवनेश्वरैः ।
न वृणे तमहं कामं भूतभावनभावनः ॥ ४५ ॥

devaiḥ kāmavaro datto mahyaṁ tribhuvaneśvaraiḥ /
na vṛṇe tam ahaṁ kāmaṁ bhūtabhāvanabhāvanaḥ //45//

45- The gods, who are custodians of all the three worlds (heaven, earth and nether world), have asked me to seek any boon I wished to have. I do not want anything from them as I am a seeker of Brahm, the supreme Consciousness and the Supreme Lord of the world. He had created everything in existence, and if I attain his closeness and manage to please him, then there is nothing that I can't have by my merely wishing to have it. Then why should I settle for a lesser boon when a higher boon is attainable by me. The gods can give me everything in this material gross world, but I don't want it, and neither am I interested in it.

Verse no. 46:

ये विक्षिप्तेन्द्रियधियो देवास्ते स्वहृदि स्थितम् ।
न विन्दन्ति प्रियं शश्वदात्मानं किमुतापरे ॥ ४६ ॥

ye vikṣiptendriyadhiyo devāste svahr̥di sthitam /
na vindanti priyaṁ śaśvadātmānaṁ kimutāpare //46//

46- It is such a big irony that even though the gods live in heaven, which is definitely holier and superior to the gross material world on earth, and are supposed to be lucky to have found an abode which is so high and also the abode of the Trinity Gods (Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the protector, and Shiva, the concluder of this world), yet they find interest in material comforts and enjoy the pleasures of the senses, albeit in a subtle way and not in a gross way that inhabitants of the mortal world do on earth.

Why, if the gods wished, it would have been so easy for them to attain final deliverance and emancipation for themselves as compared to mortal beings on earth. {The gods do not have eternal life; their souls have not attained final liberation and salvation--which means dissolution of their bodies and merger of their self with the Supreme Self, i.e. Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. The simple fact that they fight with demons, are jealous of retaining their privileges and guarding their territory, seek worship and offerings from world, etc. clearly show that they had not developed renunciation and remain engrossed in the affairs of the world, which in their case is the 'heaven', much like humans do in this material world.}

So therefore, if such highly placed entities as the gods remain indulgent in the affairs related to their world, i.e. the heaven, instead of seeking the Supreme Being

and desiring to give their souls eternal rest by merging it with the Supreme Soul, then what wonder is there if much lower creatures, such as the human beings, would remain engrossed in their own affairs related to the world in which they live, i.e. the gross material world with its base on the earth?

Verse no. 47:

**अथेशमायारचितेषु सङ्गं गुणेषु गन्धर्वपुरोपमेषु ।
रूढं प्रकृत्यात्मनि विश्वकर्तुर्भावेन हित्वा तमहं प्रपद्ये ॥ ४७ ॥**

atheśamāyāraciteṣu saṅgaṁ guṇeṣu gandharvapuropameṣu /
rūḍhaṁ prakṛtyātmāni viśvakarturbhāvena hitvā tamahaṁ prapadye //47//

47- So therefore, I should, in the little time that I have, completely detach myself from all material things of this world and their allurements because they are nothing but delusory, and instead I must focus my mind on the Supreme Being while surrendering myself to him.

Verily indeed, the world is like a magical town created on a hill or a forest by a magician using his mirage-creating skills, and only those people who are foolish and ignorant think it to be real, while those who are wise understand that there is no reality in it. It is also the same case with this world and all its charms--they are false and deluding.

Verse no. 48:

**इति व्यवसितो बुद्ध्या नारायणगृहीतया ।
हित्वान्यभावमज्ञानं ततः स्वं भावमास्थितः ॥ ४८ ॥**

iti vyavasito buddhyā nārāyaṇagrīṭayā /
hitvānyabhāvamajñānaṁ tataḥ svaṁ bhāvamāsthitaḥ //48//

48- With this enlightened thought, the self-realised and wise king Khatvanga stopped identifying himself with his gross mortal body, but focused his mind on his 'true self' which is called the Atma, the consciousness living in a person's physical body. The individual's Atma is a fraction of the Supreme Atma called Brahm, the cosmic supreme Consciousness. True meaning of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, known as Moksha, is a simple process of merging the individual's Atma with the Supreme Atma by removing the barrier of the physical body.

With this thought, king Khatvanga entered into deep Samadhi, a state of meditation where an ascetic rises above the mundane gross world and attains an exalted state of existence by realising the supreme Consciousness, and identifying himself with the latter.

Verse no. 49:

यत् तद् ब्रह्म परं सूक्ष्ममशून्यं शून्यकल्पितम् ।
 भगवान् वासुदेवेति यं गृणन्ति हि सात्वताः ॥ ४९ ॥

yat tad brahma param sūkṣmam aśūnyam śūnyakalpitaṃ /
 bhagavān vāsudeveti yaṃ grṇanti hi sātvatāḥ //49//

49- The Supreme Being, also called 'Param Brahm', represents cosmic Consciousness, and he is very difficult to understand by ignorant persons because he is extremely sublime, subtle, invisible, impersonal and out of physical reach of those who recognise only those entities that they can see, touch, feel, smell and hear in a gross world of material things. The Supreme Lord is understood only by those who are enlightened, wise, self-realised and well versed in the essential teachings of the Upanishads and other spiritual texts.

The Lord's glories are also sung by his devotees who see the Supreme Brahm in his various manifestations in this world.

Verily indeed, the only Absolute Truth in this existence is pure Consciousness, and the rest is a delusion of the senses.

Thus ends the ninth chapter of the ninth canto of Srimad Bhagwat that describes the lineage of king Anshuman of the Ikshwaku dynasty in which later on Lord Ram was born.

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PART B, Chapter 4:

Section 4.2

Lord Ram's Descendants

Srimad Bhagwat, Canto or Skandha no. 9; Chapter or Sarga no. 12, verse nos. 1-9:

This Chapter narrates briefly the time and life of the immediate descendants of Lord Ram, from his son Kusha in the Treta Yuga, the age of Lord Ram and the second of the four-era one cycle of creation and destruction, till the last king of this ancient family at the end of the Dwapar Yuga, the age of Lord Krishna and the third of the four-era cycle.

The last king of Treta Yuga was Maru who became a mystic and retired to do meditation, entering into a state of Samadhi, which is a higher transcendental state of existence when the ascetic separates his own true 'self', known as the pure consciousness, from his gross physical body to live in a hibernation mode. Maru will wake up at the end of Kali Yuga, the current era and the last phase of the four-era cycle of creation, to revive the glorious Solar race to which Lord Ram and others of the Ikshawaku dynasty belonged. {Refer: verse no. 6.}

Meanwhile, the chain of kings continued even after king Maru took to the life of a mystic, and there were many kings from the end of Treta Yuga till the end of Dwapar Yuga. All of them are listed in this chapter. {Refer: verse nos. 7-9.}

Amongst the many kings of this illustrious dynasty, there was a king who was highly enlightened, self-realised and learned, so much so that even the exalted sage Yagyavalkya learnt some intricacies of metaphysics and spiritualism from him. His name was Hiranyanabha (refer: verse nos. 3-4).

Since the purpose of our Book is to describe the story of Lord Ram who has been held in highest esteem as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, a manifestation of the Supreme Being, it would be improper, out of place, and an unwanted or unnecessary diversion or digression from the main theme by narrating the life and time of a long chain of kings after the end of the chief rulers of the Ikshawaku race had died by the end of Dwapar Yuga, because all others who came after them will have no relevance to our subject matter, and hence inconsequential for us.

Hence, only verse nos. 1-9 of Srimad Bhagwat's Canto 9, Chapter 12 are being quoted in our Book.

The respected reader must remember that this is not a history book nor am I some kind of scholar, but this book is a fruit of my way of showing my love and affection for Lord Ram whom I love and revere like no one else I do, and I devised this method of writing about the Lord's life and time, universally known as the 'Ramayana', as a means to offer my obeisance to him.

Verse no. 1:

श्रीशुक उवाच

कुशस्य चातिथिस्तस्मान्निषधस्तत्सुतो नभः ।

पुण्डरीकोऽथ तत्पुत्रः क्षेमधन्वाभवत्ततः ॥ १ ॥

śrī-śuka uvāca

kuśasya cātithistasmānṇiṣadhasta-tsutonabhaḥ /

puṇḍarīko'tha tat-putraḥ kṣemadhanvābhavattataḥ //1//

1- Sage Shukdeo continued his narration to king Parikshit: "Oh King! The son of Lord Ram was Kusha (Kuśa), and the latter's son was called Atithi. The son of Atithi was Nishad (Niṣadha), and his son was Nabha. The son of Nabha was Pundarik (Puṇḍarīka), and the latter's son was Kshemadhanva (Kṣemadhanvā).

Verse no. 2:

देवानीकस्ततोऽनीहः पारियात्रोऽथ तत्सुतः ।

ततो बलस्थलस्तस्माद् वज्रनाभोऽर्कसम्भवः ॥ २ ॥

devānīkas tato'nīhaḥ pāriyātro'tha tatsutaḥ /

tato balasthala-stasmād vajranābho'rka-sambhavaḥ //2//

2- The son of Kshemadhanva was Devanik (Devānīka), and the latter's son was called Aniha (Anīha). Aniha's son was named Pariyatra (Pāriyātra), and the latter's son was

called Balasthala. The son of Balasthala was Vajranabha (Vajranābha), who was said to have been born from the brilliant essence (or effulgence) of the Sun-God.

Verse nos. 3-4:

सगणस्तत्सुतस्तस्माद् विधृतिश्चाभवत् सुतः ।
ततो हिरण्यनाभोऽभूद् योगाचार्यस्तु जैमिनेः ॥ ३ ॥
शिष्यः कौशल्य आध्यात्मं याज्ञवल्क्योऽध्यगाद् यतः ।
योगं महोदयम् ऋषिर्हृदयग्रन्थिभेदकम् ॥ ४ ॥

sagaṇastatsutas-tasmād vidhṛtiścābhavat sutaḥ /
tato hiraṇyanābho'bhūd yogācāryas tu jaimineḥ //3//
śiṣyaḥ kauśalya ādhyātmam yājñavalkyo'dhyagād yataḥ /
yogaṁ mahodayam ṛṣi-rhṛdaya-granthi-bhedakam //4//

3-4 - The son of Vajranabha was Sagana (Sagaṇa), and the latter's son was called Vidhriti (Vidhṛti). The son of Vidhriti was Hiranyanabha (Hiraṇyanābha) who became a disciple of sage Jaimini, and under the guidance of his teacher (Jaimini), he became a great proponent and an expert teacher of mysticism and yoga (spiritualism, religious doctrines and meditation related to the philosophy of the 'self'). (3)

The high level of spiritual achievements, as well as the deep knowledge of mysticism and the principles of metaphysics and theology that Hiranyanabha possessed was so impressive that even sage Yagyawalkya, who himself was a highly respected, learned and a senior sage of his time, learnt the intricacies of 'Adhyatma Yoga' from him. The 'Adhyatma Yoga' helps one to learn how to set one's own self free from the fetters of attachment to this gross material world by enlightening a person about the mysteries of the 'self', which is pure consciousness known as the Atma, and how to bring about a union of the individual's 'self' with the cosmic 'Self' known as the supreme Consciousness or the Parmatma. It also teaches a person about the futility of pursuing this delusory world as it only leads to entanglements, and never gives peace of mind and heart. (4)

Verse no. 5:

पुष्पो हिरण्यनाभस्य ध्रुवसन्धिस्ततोऽभवत् ।
सुदर्शनोऽथाग्निवर्णः शीघ्रस्तस्य मरुः सुतः ॥ ५ ॥

puṣpo hiraṇyanābhasya dhruvasandhis tato'bhavat /
sudarśano'thāgnivarnaḥ śīghrastasya maruḥ sutaḥ //5//

5- The son of Hiranyanabha was called Pushpa (Puṣpa), and the latter's son was Dhruvsandhi (also spelled as Dhruvasandhi). The son of Dhruvsandhi was Sudarshan (Sudarśana), and the latter's son was called Agnivarna (Agnivarna)¹. The son of Agnivarna was Shighra (Śīghra), and his son was Maru.

[Note--¹In Kalidas' classical book 'Raghuvansham', we read that Agnivarna was of a very low moral, a corrupt and pervert king who spent his life in excessive sexual indulgences so much so that his body decayed due to some serious disease such as tuberculosis, and he died prematurely. His wife was pregnant at the time, so after his death the ministers and senior citizens anointed her on the throne which had hitherto always been occupied by a male heir. This was for the first time that a queen sat on the throne of the Ikshawaku dynasty. Refer: Raghuvansham, Chapter 19, verse nos. 49-57.

Since a male heir did not inherit the throne, and since Agnivarna had led a most ignoble life as a sex maniac, and consequentially died a shameful death (according to Raghuvansham), the immaculate fame of the stellar Ikshawaku race became tarnished beyond redemption. If a family's reputation is smeared with evil doings of any of its members, especially a king who is expected to be very mindful of his conduct because on his shoulders lies the burden of maintaining the family's reputation and honour, then for all practical purposes the glory, the fame, the reputation and the honour of the family comes to an end. This is why Raghuvansham, which, as the name itself suggests, is devoted to poetically narrate the glories of the Raghu dynasty in which Lord Ram was born, ends with the death of Agnivarna, signifying the end of this once great dynasty of kings.

So, it can be reasonably interpreted that the fame of the Raghu dynasty suffered a serious setback by the corrupt life of Agnivarna. But the glory of the Solar race and the Ikshawaku dynasty as it existed in the Treta Yuga, the age of Lord Ram, actually came to an end with king Maru, the grandson of Agnivarna, who retired as a mystic and entered into a state of Samadhi by doing transcendental meditation. He would later on revive this glorious Solar race, also known as the Ikshawaku race, at the end of Kali Yuga--refer: verse no. 6 herein below.]

Verse no. 6:

सोऽसावास्ते योगसिद्धः कलापग्राममास्थितः ।

कलेरन्ते सूर्यवंशं नष्टं भावयिता पुनः ॥ ६ ॥

so'sāvāste yoga-siddhaḥ kalāpa-grāmamāsthitaḥ /
kalerante sūrya-varṣaṁ naṣṭaṁ bhāvayitā punaḥ //6//

6- Maru, like his ancestor the enlightened king Hiranyanabha, attained a high degree of spiritual knowledge, especially pertaining to mystic yoga (as was done by Hiranyanabha). This knowledge and its practical implementation gave Maru a virtually eternal life, and it is believed that he still lives as a mystic at a place known as 'Kalapa Gram' (Kalāpa-grāma)--literally meaning a village (gram) that survives the entire period of a Kalpa (yuga or era).

At the end of Kali-Yuga (the present era which is the fourth in the 4-Yuga one cycle of creation and destruction), he will revive the lost glory of the Solar dynasty by begetting a son.

[Note--Kali-Yuga is roughly 4,32,000 years. It is believed to have started around 3102 BCE, after the departure of Lord Krishna. So therefore, Maru will live that long in a body that would defy decay and age. This is the mystery of yoga and the supernatural powers it grants to its practitioners. By controlling breath, a realised yogi, a mystic

who practices yoga, can put his life on hold for as long as he wants. It is like freezing himself, or like some animals that go into hibernation mode during intense cold days of the frigid winter in the Arctic and the Antarctic regions of the northern and the southern hemisphere of the earth which are mostly covered in snow.

The yogi would enter a deep cave in a mountain, shut himself inside it, hold his breath, and keeps himself in suspended animation. When he revives himself, his age, even after a passage of a long time, would be the same as the time when he had entered into a meditative trance, called 'Samadhi'.

If we factor in the intervening Dwapar Yuga which lasted for about 8,64,000 years, then king Maru will live in state of Samadhi for 8,64,000 years of Dwapar + 4,32,000 years of Kali Yuga = to roughly 12,96,000 years before reverting back to normal life at the end of Kali Yuga.]

Verse no. 7:

**तस्मात् प्रसुश्रुतस्तस्य सन्धिस्तस्याप्यमर्षणः ।
महस्वांस्तत्सुतस्तस्माद् विश्वबाहुरजायत ॥ ७ ॥**

tasmāt prasūśrutas tasya sandhis tasyāpy amarṣaṇaḥ /
mahasvāms tat-sutas tasmād viśvabāhur ajāyata //7//

7- The son of Maru was called Prasushruta (Prasūśruta), and the latter's son was Sandhi. The son of Sandhi was called Amarshan (Amarṣaṇa), and the latter's son was Mahasavan (Mahasvān). Mahasavan had a son named Vishvabahu (Viśvabāhu).

Verse no. 8:

**ततः प्रसेनजित् तस्मात् तक्षको भविता पुनः ।
ततो बृहद्बलो यस्तु पित्रा ते समरे हतः ॥ ८ ॥**

tataḥ prasenajit tasmāt takṣako bhavitā punaḥ /
tato bṛhadbalo yastu pitrā te samare hataḥ //8//

8- Continuing his narration, sage Shukdeo told king Parikshit: "Vishvabahu begot a son named Prasenjit (or Prasenajit), and from him was born a son called Takshak (Takṣaka). The son of Takshak was Brihadbal (Bṛhadbala), and he was killed by your father (Abhimanyu) during a battle.

Verse no. 9:

**एते हीक्ष्वाकुभूपाला अतीताः शृण्वनागतान् ।
बृहद्बलस्य भविता पुत्रो नाम्ना बृहद्रणः ॥ ९ ॥**

ete hīkṣvāku-bhūpālā atītāḥ śṛṇvanāgatān /
bṛhadbalasya bhavitā putro nāmnā bṛhadraṇaḥ //9//

9- With the death of Brihadbal, all the kings of the Ikshawaku (Ikṣvāku) race passed away by the end of Dwapar Yuga."

Sage Shukdeo said: "Now I will narrate the line of off-springs that would come after Brihadbal in the future-----".

[Note--With the death of Brihadbal at the hands of Parikshit's father (verse no. 8), the last remaining member of the Solar dynasty, also called the Ikshawaku race and also the Raghu race, finally ended, though its glory had already ended with Agnivarṇa. In this connection, the reader's attention is also drawn to a note attached to verse no. 5 herein above.

After Dwapar Yuga came Kali Yuga, the present era. When Kali Yoga ends, king Agnivarṇa's grandson Maru, who lives in a state of Samadhi as a mystic at a place called 'Kalapa Gram', would revive the glorious Solar Race by waking up from his transcendental state of meditation and begetting a son as expressly mentioned in verse no. 6.]

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Hindu Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

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- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version).

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) "Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan" or the "Aadi Ramayan" based on Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) "Narad Bhakti Sutra"—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) "Shandilya Bhakti Sutra"—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) "Bhakti Sutra Mala"—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the

form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram's Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) "Sundar Kand" of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads; (28) Devotional Stotras and Stutis (hymns and prayers) of Lord Hanuman; (29) The Legendary Story of Lord Hanuman—spanning three eras of Treta, Dwapar and Kali Yugas; (30) An Anthology of the Ramayan—The Story of Lord Ram from Mahabharat, Srimad Bhagwat & Kalidas' Raghuvansham.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) 'Dohawali'; (2) 'Parvati Mangal'; (3) 'Kavitalawali'; (4) 'Janki Mangal'; (5) 'Ram Lala Nahachu'; (6) 'Geetawali Ramayan'; (7) 'Vairagya Sandipani'; (8) 'Vinai Patrika'; (9) 'Barvai Ramayan'.

(A-3) A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', otherwise also known as the "Ramayana" according to Goswami Tulsidas. My English version of this Book is comprehensive and an elaborate one, as it runs into many thousands of pages that endeavour to explain each single verse of the Book 'Ram Charit Manas' in fine detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

(A-4) Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1=Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.

(A-5) (i) English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.
(ii) English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
(iii) English rendering of Devi Puran's Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.
(iv) A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord's Holy Name.

All the Author's Books listed under (A-1, A-2 and A-3) are available as e-books and printed books on the internet at the following websites: (a) www.amazon.com; (b) www.draft2digital.com; and (c) www.pothi.com.

(B-1) Further, Books listed under A-3, A-4 and A-5 are available in Printed Book format from a reputed Indian Publisher as follows:

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (B-2):

Chaukhamba Publishing House, Delhi. [Sri Neeraj Gupta.]

Postal Address: 4697/2, Street no. 21-A, (HDFC Bank wali Gali),

Ansari Road, Darayaganj, Delhi—110002.

Phone: Mobile (Neeraj Gupta)—+919811133683

Office: 011-23286537; 011-32996391

Email: chaukhambapublishinghouse@gmail.com
chaukhamba_neerj@yahoo.com

(B-2) The following Books of Goswami Tulsidas listed under A-2—viz. Vinay Patrika, Geetawali Ramayan, Kavitaawali Ramayan, Dohawali, Parvati Mangal, Janki Mangal, Vairagya Sandipani, Barvai Ramayan, Ram Lala Nahachu, along with certain other Books (e.g. Upanishads Dedicated to Lord Ram, Shandilya Bhakti Sutra, Narad Bhakti Sutra etc.) are being published by the following Indian Publisher:

Pratibha Prakashan, prop. Sri Radheyshyam Shukla, Delhi.

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